■ 2bU! / D1

Job hunting 101 for new graduates; usual questions from interviewers listed

■ METRO / A23

QC cops file charges vs PCSO officials, STL franchise holder

■ NEWS / A4

Pulse Asia survey says more Pinoys against Cha-cha but their numbers are declining

■ BUSINESS / B1

Future 'Grand Central' station: $200-M subway to link MRT 3, LRT-1

QC wants seedling bank out to pave way for urban jungle

By DJ Yap and Blanche S. Rivera

ONLY GOD CAN MAKE A TREE BUT MAN CAN build a condominium.

The Manila Seedling Bank Foundation Inc. could be replaced by a high-rise condominium unless the foundation pays P59 million in real estate taxes being demanded by the Quezon City government, according to city treasurer Victor Endriga.

QC WANTS/ A8

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, March 29, 2006 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 111 P18 website: www.inq7.net

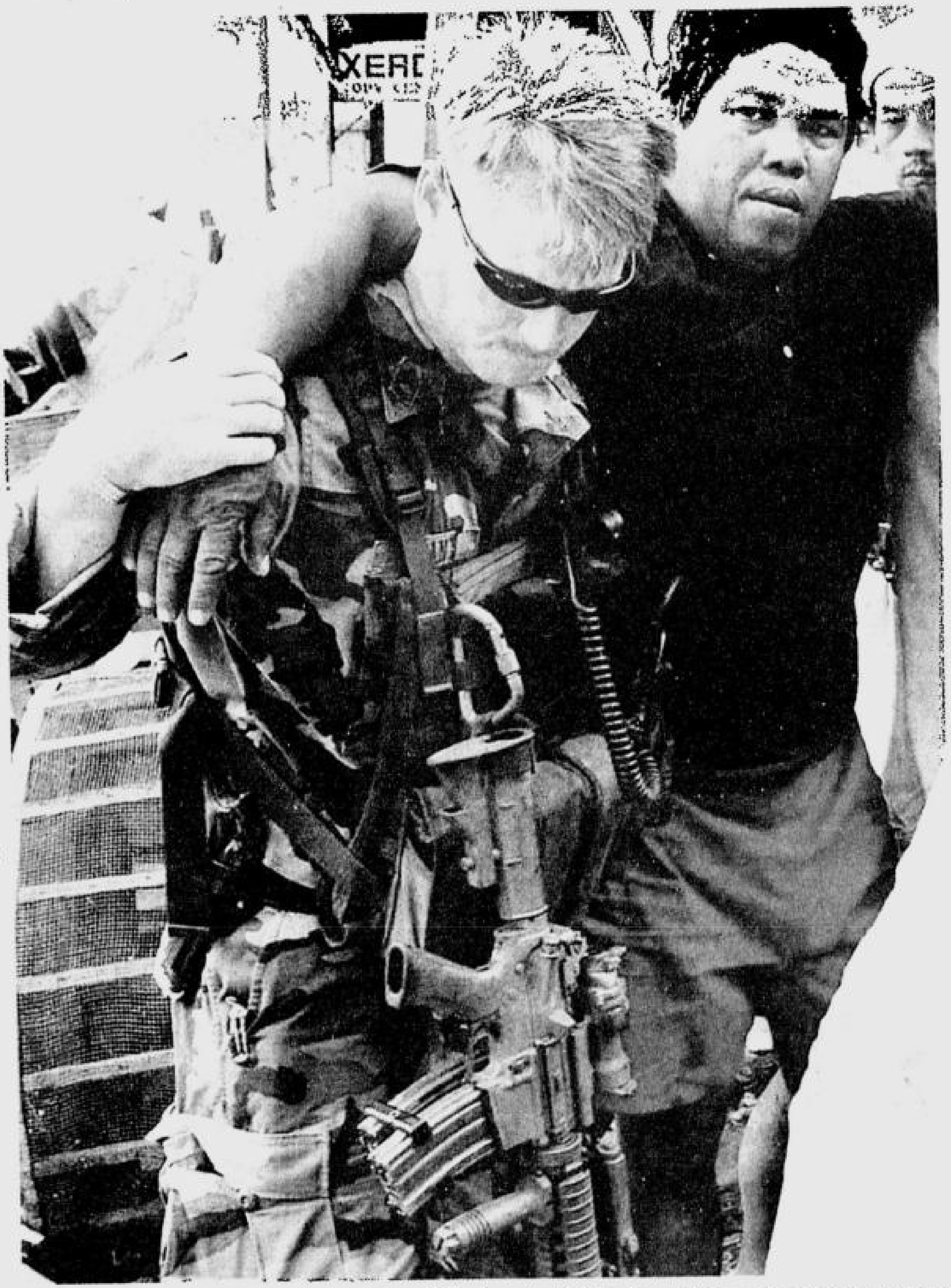
'Gov't faces jobs deficit of crisis proportions'

EMPLOYMENT DATA RELEASED BY THE GOVernment recently showed an impressive 750,000 jobs created last year but on closer inspection, the numbers hide a serious deterioration in the quality of the country's workforce, according to analysts.

The National Statistics Office's Labor Force Survey also showed that underemployment reached 6.9 million in January, an increase of 1.8 million in the previous 12 months.

GOV'T/ A8

Comelec split on Cha-cha



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER: An American soldier from the US Joint Special Operations Task Force helps evacuate the wounded after a bomb hit a Catholic-run two-story consumers cooperative in Jolo, Sulu.

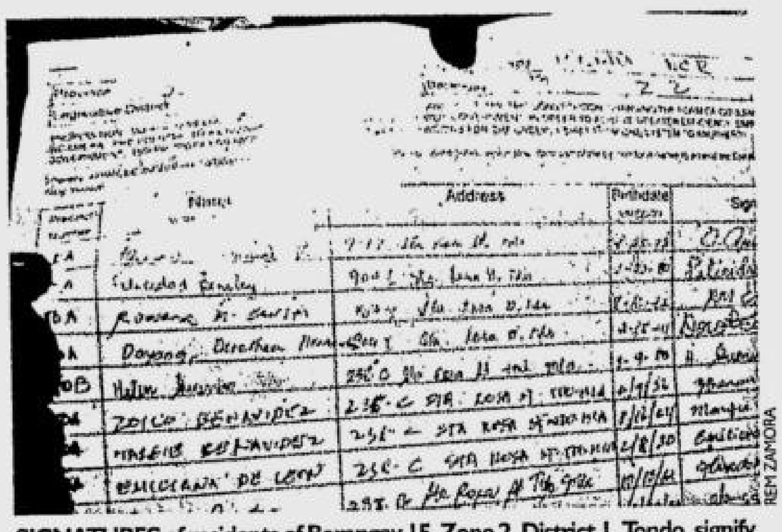
New poll exec, Abalos differ on legality of signature drive

By Jerome Aning and TJ Burgonio

COMMISSION ON Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. yesterday gave local registrars the go-signal to verify the signatures of the people calling for Charter change. But in direct contradiction of his boss, a commissioner said the poll body was barred from entertaining any such people's initiative in the absence of an enabling law.

"We have to harken to the dictates of the [Supreme Court] decision," Commissioner Romeo Brawner, a former presiding justice of the Court of Appeals, said at his confirmation hearing yesterday at the Commission on Appointments (CA). *(See story on Page A2.)*

In the case Santiago vs Comelec, the high court ruled in March 1997 that Republic Act No. 6735 (or The Initiative and Referendum Act) was inadequate to cover a people's initiative to amend the Constitution.



REM ZAMORA

SIGNATURES of residents of Barangay 15, Zone 2, District 1, Tondo, signify their approval of the proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution.

It said the Comelec was "permanently enjoined" from entertaining any such petition until a "sufficient law" had been enacted to implement such a system.

But Abalos said he did not believe his instruction to the registrars would be in violation of the high court's ruling.

"The Supreme Court was very specific. It said the Comelec can take cognizance of a petition for initiative for Charter change only after the petition is filed," he said.

What then would be the Comelec's task while awaiting the formal filing of the petition?

Said Abalos: "Before the petition is filed, the Comelec can only prescribe the form of the petition; issue through its Election Records and Statistics Office a certificate on the total number of registered voters in each legislative district; assist, through its election registrars, in the establishment of signature stations; and verify, through its election registrars, the signatures on the basis of the registry list of voters."

Abalos said the Comelec had a duty to enforce the constitutional requirement that a petition should bear "at least 12 percent of the total number of registered

COMELEC/ A20

Abu blamed for Jolo bombing

By Ed General and Julie Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

JOLO, SULU—AN EXTORTION letter and a mobile phone-detonated device indicate that the Abu Sayyaf was behind the bombing of a Church-run cooperative store that left nine people dead and 20 injured, military officials said yesterday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo denounced "in the strongest terms" the attack on the Sulu Consumers Cooperative store in Jolo on Monday and vowed that the military and police would hunt down the perpetrators. She said measures were in place to prevent further attacks.

Ms Arroyo, in a statement, also called for the swift passage of the long-delayed antiterrorism bill in Congress, which she said would "constrict, contain and control" terrorism more effectively.

"Terror never sleeps and we need to consistently carry out our comprehensive action plan to rid our country and the world of this grave threat," she said.

The provincial civil defense

ABU/ A21

Court temporarily stops DOJ inquiry into Ultra stampede

By Armand N. Nocum and Margaux C. Ortiz

THE COURT OF APPEALS HAS temporarily barred the Department of Justice from conducting a preliminary investigation into the deadly "Wowowee" stampede for allegedly showing an institutional bias against ABS-CBN, the popular game show's television producer.

In a three-page resolution, the court gave Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and his prosecutors 10 days to comment on the ABS-CBN petition and set a hearing on April 24. Under the rules of court, a temporary restraining order (TRO) lasts for 60 days.

The criminal case against ABS-CBN was initiated by the NBI and the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) following the Feb. 4 stampede that left 71 people dead and 900 injured.

Charges of reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and multiple physical injuries have been brought against 17 persons, including ABS-CBN officials and personnel. The penalty is imprisonment ranging from six months and one day to 12 years.

ABS-CBN lawyers last week filed the petition seeking to stop the department from looking into the factual basis for the filing of a criminal complaint against the network's executives, accusing prosecutors of "unseemly haste" in pinning down ABS-CBN for the tragedy.

Lawyer Regis Puno said his clients did not stand a chance of being accorded a fair and impartial inquiry by the department.

The petitioners included accused ABS-CBN officials Ma. Rosario Santos-Cancio, Socorro V. Vidanes, Marilou Almaden, Cipriano Luspo, Morly Stewart, Harold James Nieva, Norbert Vi-

COURT TEMPORARILY/ A21

Government operating like employment agency

By Jerry E. Esplanada

(Last of three parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

BLOATED APTLY DESCRIBED THE bureaucracy during the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, with a workforce of more than 1.4 million, the civilian bureaucracy remains puffed up.

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has justified the size of the bureaucracy, saying "the problem lies on employee distribution rather than mere totals."

"Compared with more developed economies like Canada, it has opposite figures. (Canada) boasts of 75 percent personnel in Local Government Units or LGUs out of the total, while only 27 percent of Philippine personnel are employed in LGUs. Moreover, geographical distribution shows Metro Manila employing 28.1 percent of total government personnel when 30.4 percent of national government employees are reporting in the region," said the CSC in a 1999 personnel inventory.

But CSC Chair Karina Constantino-David, who joined the constitutional body in 2001, says otherwise.

"The problem with the commission is, more and more, government has operated like an employment agency either because of the nature of politics where you're paying back political debts

GOVERNMENT/ A12

Not a dry eye in Guinsaugon on 40th day

By Jani Arnaiz and Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

GUINSAUGON, ST. BERNARD, Southern Leyte—Not a drop of rain fell yesterday during the Mass marking the 40th day after a portion of a mountain collapsed and buried this village of 1,000 people.

There was not a dry eye when Sandy Peligro, 17, recounted before some 1,000 relatives of victims and residents of neighboring barangays how dead bodies, including his mother, were piled like fish inside the barangay hall of Malibago.

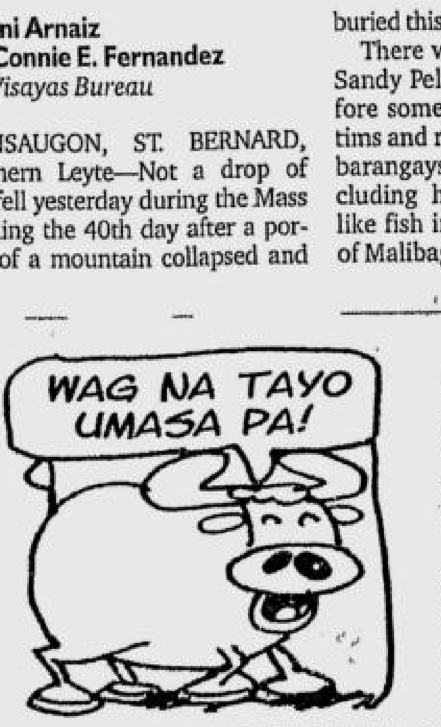
Sandy said he was at the nearby San Juan Polytechnic College in San Juan town, where he was studying, when the tragedy struck.

He rushed to St. Bernard, about 5 km away, after receiving word about the landslide that wiped out Guinsaugon on Feb. 17.

"When I reached Guinsaugon, I was shocked to see it gone. I tried to go to our [house] but we were prevented from going there but I saw my sister Jobelyn being rescued," Sandy narrated.

He recalled seeing Jobelyn's face bloodied and broken; he

NOT A DRY/ A10


WAG NA TAYO UMASA PA!

Eradicating poverty a 'utopian dream'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

TO THINK THAT THIS MAN HEADS THE National Anti-Poverty Commission.

Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan, lead convenor of the NAPC, is clueless on the definition of poverty in the country.

He also believes that stamping out poverty is a "utopian dream," and is blaming some Filipinos' abject living standards on their laziness, lack of skills and low IQ.

Declared Ampatuan at a briefing in Malacañang late Monday afternoon: "We all know that poverty will always be there; it is utopian to think that poverty will be eradicated. No matter how good is the antipoverty program, there will still be elements of poverty.

"No matter how good is the macro perfor-

ERADICATING/ A10

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Eastern and Southern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/03/28/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONT PAGE

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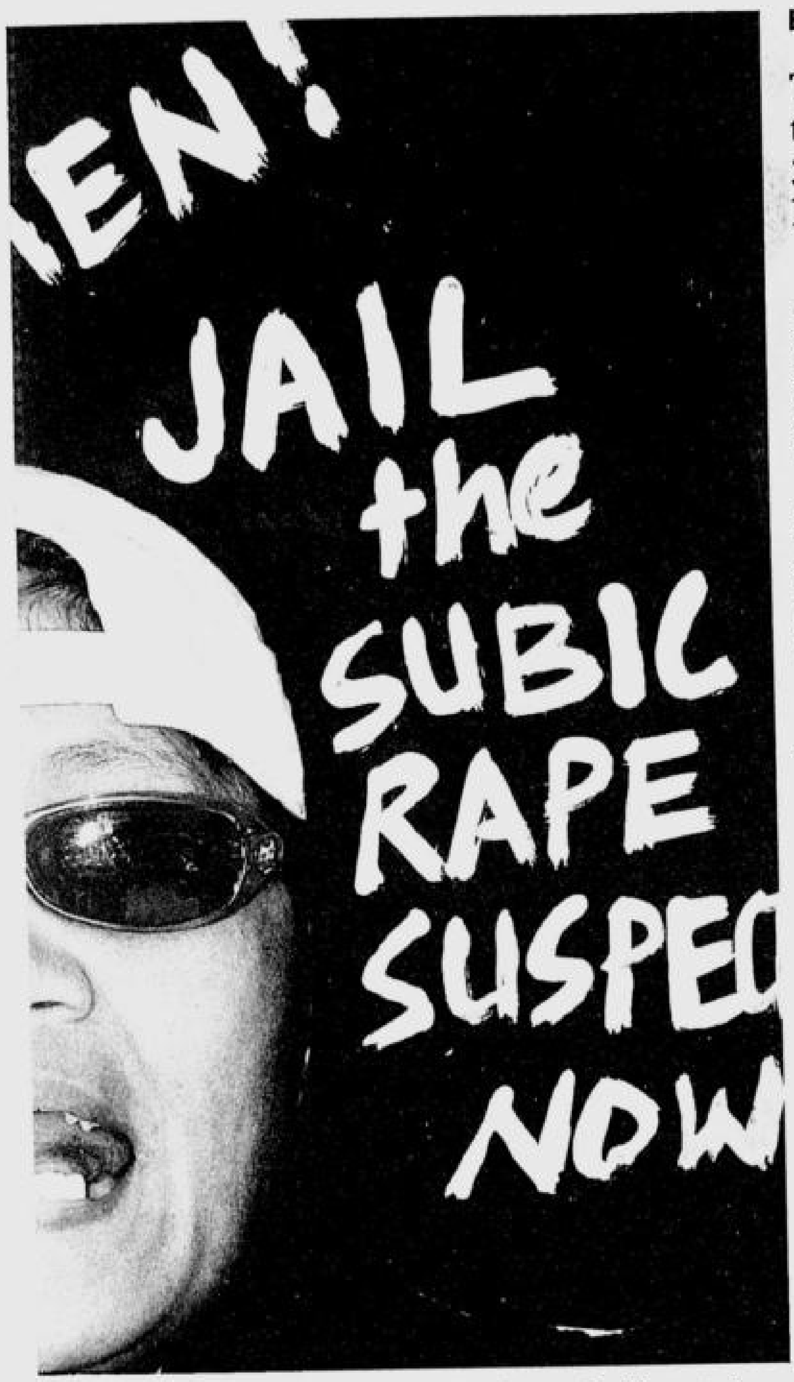
Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

GIs' rape trial moved to Makati


EN!
JAIL the SUBIC RAPE SUSPEC NOW

MILITANT PROTESTER makes his feelings known in this poster in support of the Subic rape complainant. REM ZAMORA

By Armand N. Nocum

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY ORDERED THE TRANSFER to Makati City of the trial of four US Marines accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipina to speed up resolution of the case, which a Philippine-US agreement requires to be completed within a year.

Assistant Court Administrator Ismael Khan said the high court's decision followed a request by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and the lawyers of the complainant. The choice of Makati over Manila or Quezon City was based on the caseloads of the courts in these place, Khan added.

The Olongapo City Regional Trial Court postponed the Marines' arraignment last week after Judge Renato Dilag inhibited himself from the case following a complaint that he had failed to disclose his son used to work for a law firm representing one of the Marines.

Gonzalez asked for the transfer of the trial in view of the fact that Olongapo's two other judges could not take the case. In his one-page memorandum, Gonzalez said Judge Reynaldo Caguioa might also inhibit himself due to conflict of interest, leaving only one other alternative, Judge Avelino Lazo who is retiring in December.

"Considering that under the Visiting Forces Agreement, the judicial proceedings (have) to be completed in a period of one year, it would be dangerous to start the trial of this case and later, suspend (it) in the middle of the trial with the retirement of Judge Lazo," Gonzalez said.

Khan said it was up to the Department of Justice to decide whether to let the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office continue to handle the case, assign the case to prosecutors in Makati or to handle it directly.

Court officials in Makati said they had not received a copy of the Supreme Court's order as of noon yesterday but the case would be raffled among the Makati Regional Trial Court's 29 branches as soon as the Supreme Court order is received.

A source at the Supreme Court said that in addition to the question of caseload, the justices also considered the matter of aesthetics in transferring the hearing to Makati. The source noted that the courts in Quezon City and in Manila were in dismal physical condition.

The complainant claims she was raped inside a van by Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith on Nov. 1 while the three other Marines cheered him on.

Smith has admitted to "consensual sex" with the woman. The three other men have acknowledged being inside the van with Smith and the woman, but denied any rape took place.

Smith and his co-defendants, Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier, belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan. They face capital charges of rape and conspiracy to commit rape.

They are under the custody of the US Embassy in Manila. *With report from AP*

It's a breeze for Garci's replacement

By TJ Burgonio

THE MAN WHO TOOK OVER FROM VIRgilio Garcillano in the Commission on Elections had an easy time of it before the Commission on Appointments yesterday, and no one was a bit surprised.

Unlike his predecessor, Romeo Brawner breezed through his confirmation after he impressed both administration and opposition lawmakers with his integrity and probity.

Members of the CA committee on constitutional commissions, chaired by Sen. Alfredo Lim, heaped glowing praise on the nominee before unanimously recommending his appointment to the CA plenary.

The praises centered on Brawner's handling of the celebrated "Diones massacre" case as a trial court judge in 1993 where he convicted five policemen for the murder of three women and the frustrated murder of another in Benguet.

The four women were caught shoplifting in a bazaar in La Union, hauled off, assaulted and tortured before they were dumped in a ravine in Sablan, Benguet, in June 1992.

"We are in fact emphasizing the character of this nominee, of his courage in the face of insurmountable odds to perform a duty... and we expect him to do just that in his next position as commissioner of the Commission on Elections. Am I correct?" Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said.

"That's correct. And we need people like him in the Comelec, especially nowadays," replied Rep. Marcelino Libanan.

Rep. Aurelio Umali then moved for approval of the 70-year-old Brawner's appointment. Rep. Rodolfo Plaza manifested his support of the confirmation before Enrile seconded the motion.

President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Brawner to the Comelec in July last year to replace Garcillano, who was bypassed twice by the CA and was not reappointed.

The appointment of Brawner, who retired as Court of Appeals presiding justice, came one month after the "Hello Garci" wiretap scandal purportedly involving the President and Garcillano in a conspiracy to rig the results of the May 2004 presidential elections broke in June 2005.

Brawner was appointed a justice in the Court of Appeals in 1995. In 2003, he chaired the 12th Division of the Court of Appeals which heard the case of the Oakwood mutineers in 2003.

Among the citations he has received are the Chief Justice Jose P. Laurel Award for Judicial Excellence as Outstanding Regional Trial Court Judge handed out by the Foundation for Judicial Excellence, and the Best Decision Award in Civil Law given by the Chief Justice Fred Ruiz Castro Memorabilia Commission.

Brawner also received a commendation from President Fidel Ramos for his decision on the Diones case.

Brawner himself provided some light moments at the CA hearing when he recounted his "disappointment" with the movie made on the life of Diones, the 17-year-old girl who survived the massacre and lived to tell the tale.

"The Myrna Diones Massacre: God Save Us" starred Kris Aquino as Myrna.

"Of course I had to see the movie and it was the greatest disappointment of my life when I saw the judge depicting my role to be a dumb... without saying anything," Brawner said, eliciting laughter.

Contrary to how he was depicted in the movie, he said he was very assertive and had even rejected motions for postponement of the trial just so the star witness, Diones, who was then in the custody of the police, could wrap up her testimony.

On 37th year, Reds to step up attacks

COMMUNIST GUERrillas, marking the 37th anniversary of Asia's longest-running Maoist rebellion, urged their fighters yesterday to step up attacks to hasten the downfall of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Let us accelerate the momentum of our tactical offensives," the central committee of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines said in a message saluting 37 years of fighting of its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

"We must fight only battles that we can win," the message said. "We must conduct ambushes, raids and arrest operations in which we have the upper hand by concentrating a superior force and taking advantage of the element if surprise."

The government has long accused the NPA of extortion and economic sabotage, and last month, the President announced the rebels had teamed up with right-wing elements in the military in a coup plot she said would've destroyed democracy in the Philippines had it succeeded. *AP*

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Palace backing nomination of FPJ as National Artist for film

MALACAÑANG IS BACKING THE nomination of the late actor and losing presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. for the National Artist Award for film.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said: "From the start, the President and her Cabinet has supported the nomination of Fernando Poe Jr. as a National Artist. Even during the elections when this was floated, she has always been for this."

Mowelfund executive director Boots Anson Roa has nominated Poe among the candidates for National Artist this year for his contribution not only as an actor but also as a director in numerous Tagalog classics.

"Fernando Poe Jr. deserves the respect and deserves the recognition if and when the NCCA (National Commission for Culture and the Arts) decides that he is the winner. We have to confer him that as an artist and leading stalwart not only in show biz but also in the arts and culture," Defensor said.

Defensor said that Malacañang, however, would not actively lobby for his nomination in order not to politicize the event.

Despite being a fierce rival in the last elections, Defensor said the President considered Poe a "gentleman." *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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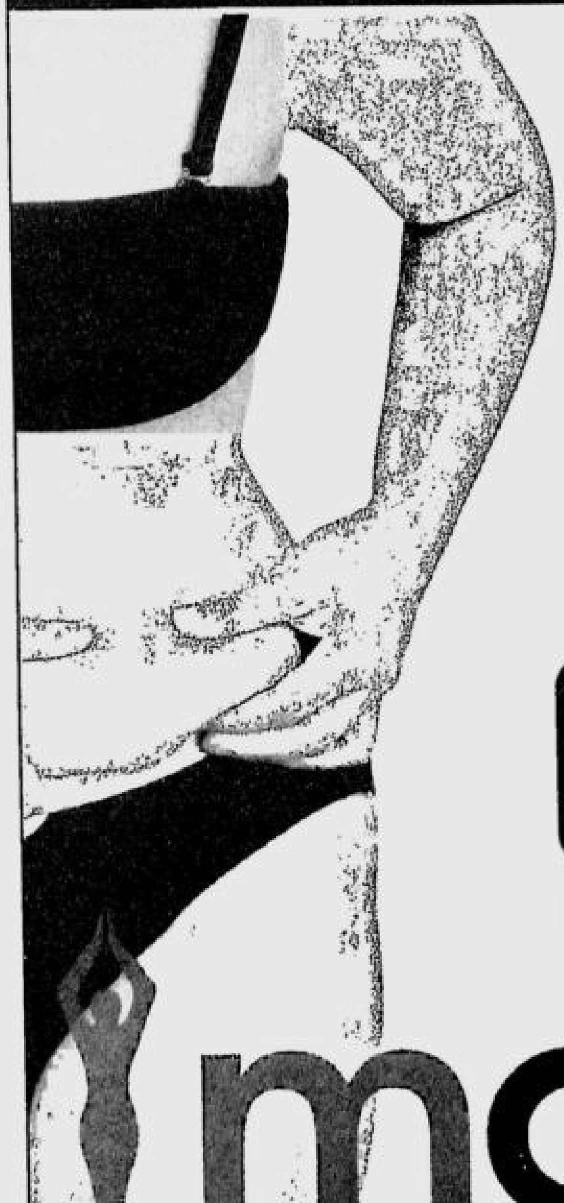

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Corrections

IN THE MARCH 21 ISSUE, a Metro story on Page A14 — "Electric post topples, hits cruising car in QC" — misstated the plate number of the car that was damaged when an electric post toppled on Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City. The car's plate number is XKZ 909 — not XKZ 990.

* * *

IN LATER EDITIONS OF the March 25 issue, the front-page banner story — "Bernas: They are desperate" — misstated that President Macapagal-Arroyo was seeking to amend the 1973 Charter. The President is seeking amendments to the 1987 Constitution — not the 1973 Charter.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 26 ISSUE, a caption of a Page A6 photo accompanying a front-page story — "Museum is living tribute to man truly for others" — misstated the name of the Imus bishop. The bishop's name is Luis Antonio Tagle — not Jose Luis Tagle Sr.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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Survey says more Pinoys buck Cha-cha but numbers declining

FILIPINOS WHO DO NOT CONSIDER it right to amend the Constitution at this time slightly outnumber those who favor amending the document – 48 percent to 43 percent.

A survey conducted nationwide by Pulse Asia Inc. from Feb. 24 to March 18 also found that 63 percent of Filipinos had "little knowledge, almost none or no knowledge at all" of the Constitution.

"Of the 48 percent who deem Charter change inappropriate at present, half (24 percent) oppose it now but are open to it in the future, while the other half (24 percent) do not see the need for Charter change now or at any other time in the future," Ana Maria L. Tabunda, Pulse Asia executive director, said yesterday in a statement.

Pulse Asia noted that the number of Filipinos against Charter change had declined from 55 percent in March and October 2005.

"Between October 2005 and March 2006, the percentage of those opposing Charter change now drops significantly in Class ABC (minus 18 percentage points) and in Metro Manila (minus 19 percentage points)," Tabunda said.

Conversely, the number of those in favor of Charter change has been growing.

In March 2005, only 29 percent of Filipinos favored immediate amendments to the Constitution. This figure rose to 36 percent in October 2005 and to 43 percent this month, according to Pulse Asia.

"Fewer Filipinos are now for having Charter change sometime in the future instead of immediately (24 percent in March 2006 versus 35 percent in October 2005), while indecision regarding the timing of Charter change has dropped (from 16 percent to 9 percent between March 2005 and March 2006)," Tabunda said.

Regarding those who hardly knew anything about the 1987 Constitution, Pulse Asia said 28 percent reported knowing enough, while only 6 percent claimed knowing a great deal about the Charter.

"These figures are practically the same as those recorded in March and October 2005," Tabunda said.

These finding must be music to the ears of the proponents of Charter change, including President Macapagal-Arroyo and her supporters.

The survey, which covered 1,200 representative adults 18 years old and above, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Armed Forces and Police Savings & Loan Association, Inc.
(AFPSLAI)
(Authorized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas)
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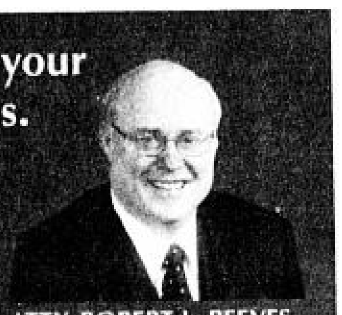
NOTICE OF 34th ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY MADE that the **Armed Forces and Police Savings and Loan Association, Inc. (AFPSLAI)** will hold its 34th Annual Membership Meeting on 29 April 2006, Saturday at 8:00 AM at the Bulwagang Heneral Arturo T Enrile (AFP Museum and Multi-Purpose Theater), Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City for the purpose of electing the members of the Board of Trustees for the year 2006-2007 and to amend the By-laws and to transact other business.

Registration starts at 7:00 AM and closes at exactly 8:00 AM.

(Sgd.) Atty. Samuel B. Padilla
Corporate Secretary



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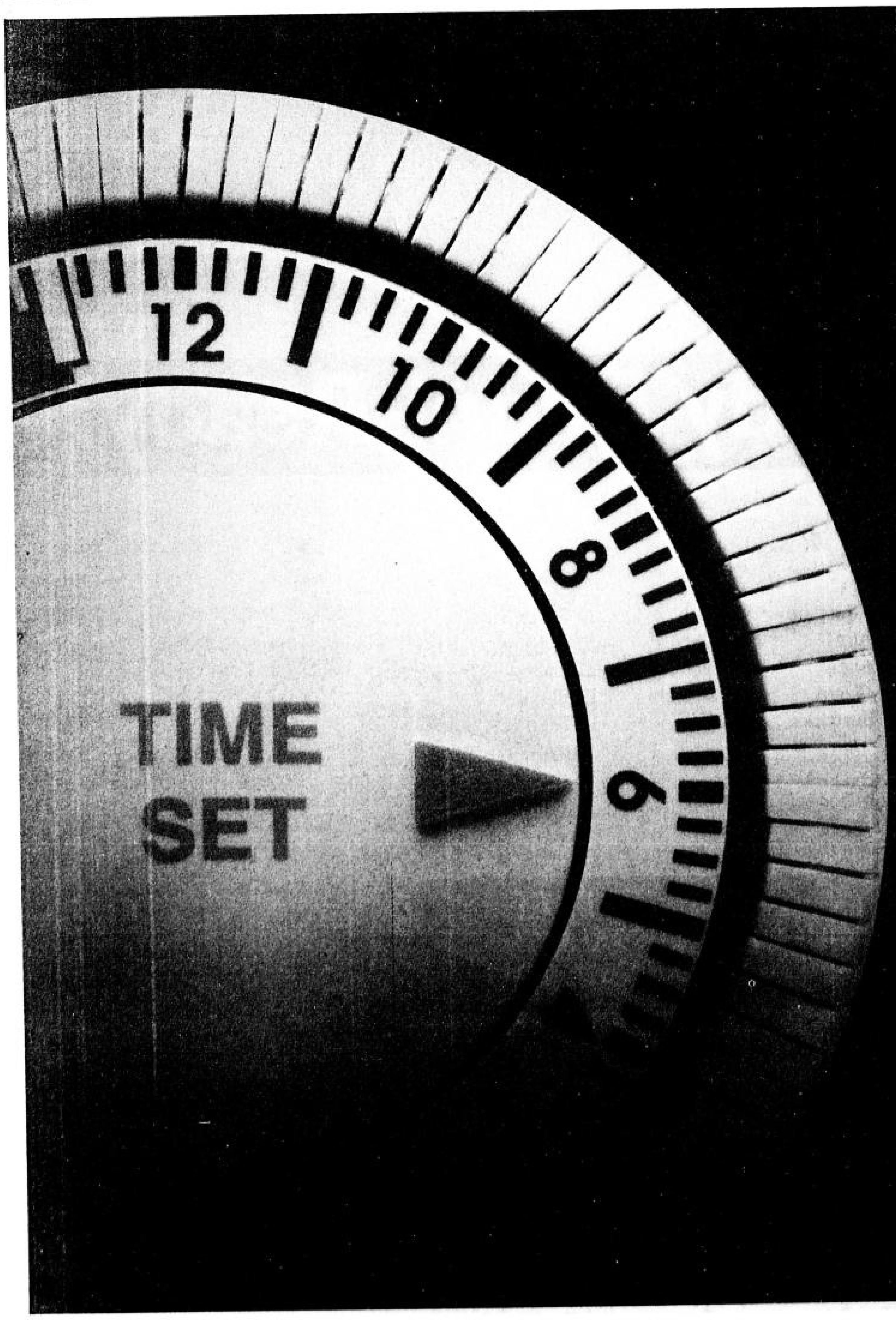

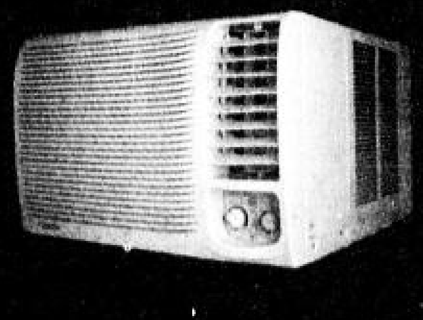

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Court-martial of 29 Magdalo leaders resumes

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Tarra V. Quismundo

AFTER A SIX-MONTH HIATUS, THE COURT-martial of the core leaders of the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny resumes at Camp Aguinaldo today at 9 a.m.

Col. Tristan Kison, Armed Forces Public Information Office chief, said the appointment of a new law member to the court made the resumption possible.

The last hearing of the case against the 29 leaders of the so-called Magdalo group that staged the aborted mutiny was held on Sept. 26, 2005.

Kison said Lt. Col. Edmund Janda had been replaced by Lt. Col. Ann Escarlan on the recommendation of the Judge Advocate General's Office (Jago). Janda stepped down as a law member on Sept. 26 after one of the accused made a "peremptory challenge" against him.

Without a law member, the court president, Maj. Gen. Vicente Guerzon Jr., suspended the hearing until Janda could be replaced.

Kison could not say why the appointment of a new law member took so long.

A total of 96 Magdalo members, including the 29 core leaders, are being tried before a military tribunal for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman under Article of War 96 and for conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline under Article 97 for the takeover of the Oakwood Premier apartment-hotel in Makati City. They were protesting, among other things, corruption in the government, particularly the defense establishment.

The core leaders are also being tried separately on coup d'etat charges in a Makati City court.

Yesterday, however, only 16 of the 26 Magdalo members facing coup charges attended proceedings at the Makati Regional Trial Court, Branch 148.

Two of them, Capt. Segundino Orfiano Jr. and 1st Lt. Billy Pascua of the Philippine Air Force, opted to miss yesterday's proceedings for the first time, adding to the growing number of absentees at every hearing.

"They asked me to come over for a waiver, they did not say why. But maybe it was personal, maybe they wanted to do something else on this day so they executed a written waiver," said Theodore Te, lawyer of the two accused.

Separate trial

Consistently absent from the last four hearings were Navy Lieutenants Antonio Trillanes IV and James Layug and Marine Capt. Gary Alejano, among the core Magdalo leaders.

Five others, Army Captains Milo Maestrecampo, Laurence Louis Somera and Albert Baloloy, 2nd Lt. Kristoffer Bryan Yasay and 1st Lt. Cleo Dongga-As chose not to attend court proceedings for the second time yesterday.

Asked if his clients' absence may be a form of protest, Te said this may well be the case.

"I think that may be part of it, although they are not saying it. It can be tiring in terms of coming here, and they are very restricted ... They are actually detention prisoners, but I would have wished that [there were] dignified ways of treating them," Te told reporters.

Te expressed surprise at yesterday's added security and identification measures for the accused: Each had a green tag pinned to his back with the word "Magdalo" and a three-character code of sorts, such as D-17, printed on it.

Aside from that, they wore the ID cards with the same codes that they had been asked to wear earlier, after the Armed Forces of the Philippines National Capital Region Command (AFP-NCRCom) took over security arrangements for the Magdalo hearings in February.

The NCRCom was ordered to tighten security for the civilian court hearings following the Jan. 17 escape of four mutineers, including three who were on trial in the Makati court.

Of the fugitives, 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan has been recaptured, while the three others, including two of his co-accused in the coup d'etat case, remained at large.

Those who remain free are Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon who escaped after a hearing at the Makati court on Dec. 14, 2005. He was recaptured in the company of military prosecutor Capt. Candelaria Rivas last Jan. 27.

San Juan, Army Capt. Nathaniel Rabonza and 1st Lts. Sonny Sarmiento and Patricio Bumidang Jr. escaped from Fort Bonifacio last Jan. 17.

During the proceedings, San Juan was put on the witness stand to attest to his continued solitary confinement at the Intelligence Service (ISG) Compound in Fort Bonifacio, in defiance of a two-week-old court order, said Te.

On March 14, Branch 148 Judge Oscar Pimentel had directed military custodians to return San Juan and a co-accused, 1st Lt. Audie Tocloy, to the Custodial Management Unit (CMU), a stockade in Fort Bonifacio, where several of their colleagues are detained.

Job Fiesta at SM Manila

JOBS AWAIT THE NEW GRADUATES OF 2006 and other job seekers with the staging of Job Fiesta!, an intercollege job fair, at the fifth floor activity area of SM Manila from March 30 to March 31. Admission is free.

Over 25 companies are represented in Job Fiesta! which is being organized by Colegio de San Juan de Letran Batch 1981 as well as Manila Rep. Rudy Bacani and Manila Councilor Marjun Isidro Jr. The event is also being held in preparation for Batch '81's hosting of the Letran Grand Alumni Homecoming this November.

Participating companies include St. Mary's Publishing Inc., Metro Inc., Acusys, Convergys, Jobcity.net, Trabaho.com, OFW Ngayon and many more.

Interested parties may call Ruth or Lita at 635-2982 or 667-3286.

INQ7 columnist ordered arrested

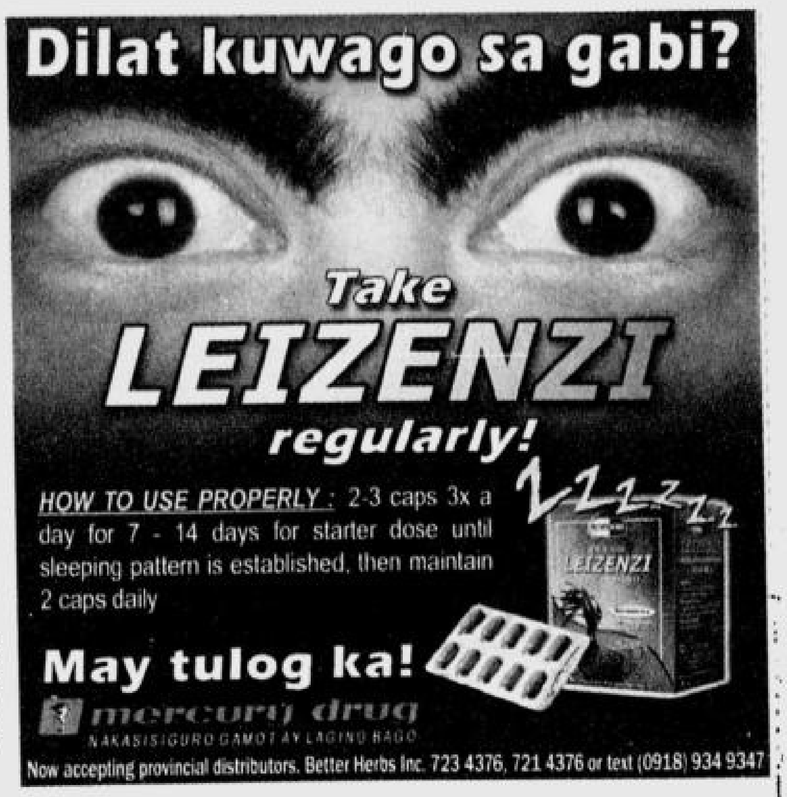
By Joel Francis Guinto
INQ7.net

A MANILA COURT HAS ISSUED AN arrest warrant for INQ7.net columnist William "Billy" Esposo over an P11-million libel case filed against him by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, the columnist's lawyer said.

In a phone interview yesterday, David Narvasa said Esposo would post bail of P10,000 today.

The charges stemmed from an alleged libelous column by Esposo titled "How to solve a problem like Mike Arroyo," which was posted on INQ7.net on July 5, 2004, Narvasa said.

The First Gentleman lodged the complaint before the Manila Prosecutor's Office last Aug. 2, 2004. It was forwarded to the Manila Regional Trial Court on March 21 this year, Narvasa said.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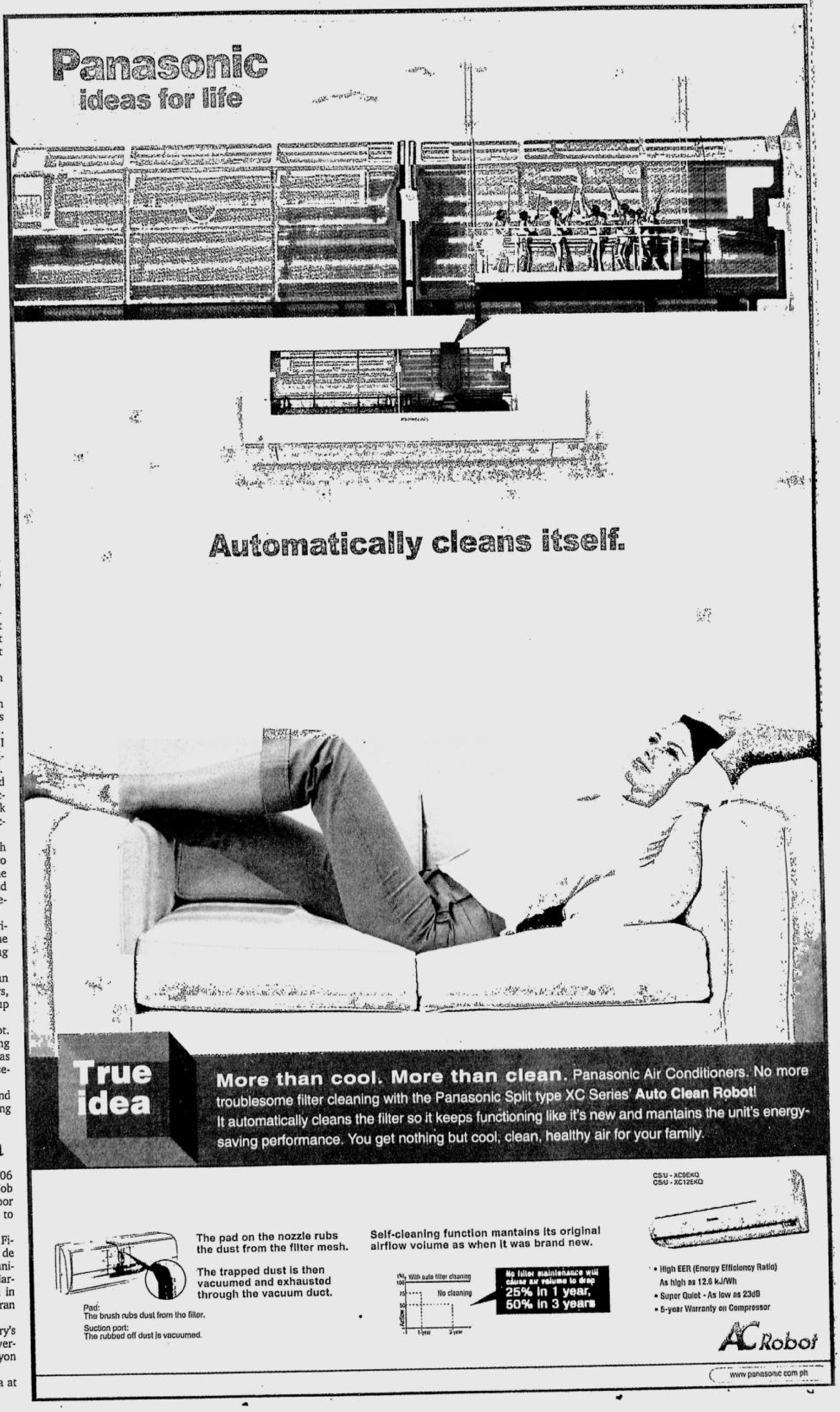
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Tax relief for the poor nears OK

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS committee has formally endorsed for plenary approval the proposed reforms in the individual income tax system aimed at equitably distributing the tax burden among Filipino taxpayers.

In a sponsorship speech yesterday, Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus said the much-awaited House Bill 5296 would re-adjust tax brackets to expand the tax base while also increasing personal exemptions and exempting minimum wage earners from paying tax on income.

Lapus said the bill would give tax relief to Filipinos from the low-income groups and "once and for all render equity" to the ranks of salaried Filipinos who bear the entire tax burden for the country.

He pointed out that it was high time that the government "correct such situation while making the individual tax system more equitable and easier to administer thereby encouraging tax compliance."

Lapus said the proposal was a "just and equitable application" of Philippine tax laws and a sensible step to give a break to the working class and low/middle income earners making P400 and below.

Airport cops to probe ceiling collapse

By Nikko Dizon and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

ASIDE FROM CONDUCTING ITS own investigation into the collapse of a ceiling at the mothballed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, the Manila International Airport Authority has asked the Philippine National Police-Aviation Security Group to conduct a separate investigation to dispel rumors of sabotage.

"The Miaa is not saying there was sabotage. We are asking the PNP-ASG to conduct an investigation to rule out speculations that there was sabotage involved," said Florencio Montalbo Jr., Miaa assistant general manager for Naia 3, in a statement.

Some 100 square meters of the ceiling at the arrival area of the terminal fell to the floor early Monday morning, causing yet another delay in the opening of the facility that has lain unused for the last five years.

Miaa general manager Alfonso Cusi has created a committee of Miaa experts to investigate the ceiling collapse.

It would coordinate with a technical group from the Department of Transportation and Communication in the overall manager of the terminal.

The incident also prompted Cusi to suspend indefinitely the test run scheduled on Friday, which would have seen two Cebu Pacific flights to Hong Kong take off from Naia 3 and return to the terminal the same day.

In an interview over dzBB radio, Cusi said the incident "raise(d) doubts on the workmanship (of Naia 3)."

He said the airport terminal would be thoroughly inspected.

"Even if it was expropriated or voluntarily turned over, the warranty or guaranty (of the contractor) that it was built in accordance with the approved plan remains," Cusi said.

The terminal was built by Takenaka Corp., the Japanese company contracted by Naia 3's developer, the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) consortium.

It was Takenaka that reported the ceiling's collapse to the Miaa.

Montalbo said the Miaa wrote Takenaka yesterday seeking a formal investigation of the incident.

The airport authority will also hire an "independent company to conduct a separate investigation," Montalbo said.

"As we take note of the general public support for the immediate opening of the new terminal, there is reason to believe that this incident was a blessing in disguise. No persons were hurt and this will afford the Miaa an opportunity to cause, through the contractors concerned, the rectification of all possible defects in the terminal," Cusi added.

CLEAN UP. Workers hose down the sidewalk of Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in preparation for its soft opening, which was delayed by the collapse of a portion of the terminal's ceiling.

JESS YUSON

To Malacañang officials, the ceiling collapse was also a "blessing in disguise" and a "temporary setback."

"An investigation is ongoing and let us not speculate on the Naia 3 incident which is a temporary setback to our plans," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said the Palace was undaunted by the structural fiasco.

"What happened will not delay the opening of Naia 3. Nothing has been delayed because we are doing the validation and inspection anyway where we expect to look for problems, if any, before the opening. This is part of the validation work," Defensor said in a press conference in Malacañang.

When asked if the Palace considered the incident a "blessing in disguise" because it happened before the terminal was opened and not after when many people might have been hurt, Defensor said: "Yes, we can say that. We will not open the airport if there are deficiencies in the construction side."

He said the incident was hardly a source of embarrassment for the government since it happened while due diligence was being conducted to test the facility..

He said the blame for any structural defects would have to be assumed by Takenaka.

"The final validation will have to be done in coordination with Takenaka for the guarantees and insurance to kick in. We don't want to lose the guarantees and insurance because we didn't check the facility very well before opening," Defensor said.

Defensor refused to comment on whether the ceiling collapse would have a bearing on the issue of compensation between the government and Piatco, whose contract to build and operate Naia 3 was voided by the Supreme Court.

"We're still not talking of the money or price of the facility because we are still talking about the soundness of the infrastructure," he said. The Supreme Court had ordered to government to reimburse Piatco to the tune of P3 billion after it expropriated the terminal.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita met yesterday with government lawyers and technical experts to assess the problem and to continue making arrangements for the opening of Naia 3 which, according to Bunye, had been set for "within the year."

Benguet boy tops PNPA graduates

A NATIVE OF LA TRINIDAD, Benguet topped the 2006 graduating class of the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA), according to the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC).

The top ten in the Bagsay-Lahi class includes four female cadets.

Margarita R. Cojuangco, PPSC president, said cadet Benjamin D. Balais would receive the Presidential Kampilan Award from President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the guest of honor and speaker at graduation rites to be held in Camp Mariano Castañeda, Silang, Cavite on March 29.

The 25-year-old cadet is the eldest among the five children of Dimas B. Balais and Nora L. Dinamling.

Number two in the class is Cadet Lemuel Josef J. Clarete of Upi, Maguindanao. He will receive the Vice Presidential Kampilan Award.

Third is Cadet Stephen George B. Antonio of Tadian, Mountain Province. Antonio, 25, the assistant editor of the PNPA's Kalasag magazine, will receive the Secretary of Interior and Local Government Kampilan Award.

The four female cadets in the top ten awardees are Cadets Neva Renchie I. de Chavez of Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Arlene N. Abuan of Calamba City, Laguna; Anabel G. Davocol of Balire, Tunga, Leyte and Grace M. Jamila of Digos, Davao del Sur.

Dimaapi; 79

PAULA GUTIERREZ DIMAAPI, 79, of Makinabang, Baliuag, Bulacan died on Monday in a vehicular accident. She is survived by her children Ricardo, Zenaida, Amelia, Liway, Lyn, Roly, Romy and Rod. Her body lies at their residence in Makinabang. Interment will be on April 1 at 2 p.m. at United Memorial Park, Taal, Pulilan, Bulacan.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, March 29, 2006
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Is 49:8-15
Gospel: John 5:17-30

Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father goes on working and so do I." And the Jews tried all the harder to kill him, for Jesus not only broke the Sabbath observance, but also made himself equal with God, calling him his own Father.

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I assure you, the Son cannot do anything by himself, but only what he sees the Father do. And whatever he does, the Son also does. The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does; and he will show him even greater things than these, so that you will be amazed.

As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom he wills. In the same way the Father judges no one, for he has entrusted all judgment to the Son, and he wants all to honor the Son as they honor the Father. Whoever ignores the Son, ignores as well the Father who sent him.

Truly, I say to you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; and there is no judgment for him because he has passed from death to life. Truly, the hour is coming and has indeed come, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and, on hearing it, will live. For the Father has life in himself and he has given to the Son also to have life in himself. And he has empowered him as well to carry out Judgment, for he is a son of man.

Do not be surprised at this: the hour is coming when all those lying in tombs will hear my voice and come out; those who have done good shall rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

I can do nothing of myself, and I need to hear Another One to judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me."

Commentary

Isaiah speaks of wonder, of what will come if the people repent: freedom, the favor of God, light, pasture, water, pity, even the earth will make it easier for them to live with grace. All will come from afar and the earth and its people will rejoice in God who never ever forgets us. Jesus speaks lovingly of his Father—the one who does all this and more—who is at work in the world through him now. He does only what he sees God doing! Do we do only what we see Jesus doing in God? What do others see when they watch us? Are we known, like Jesus, as the ones who seek and do the will of the one who sends us out from our baptisms?

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Show's axing a business move – dzRJ

By Alcuin Papa

THE MANAGEMENT OF FM RADIO STATION dzRJ said the axing of a radio show critical to the Arroyo administration was a "business decision" and that there was no pressure from Malacañang.

In a terse statement sent to the INQUIRER, the decision to cancel "Buhay Manggagawa" was a decision "based on our right to reprogram our station when we find it fitting to do so, particularly when we believe that the program's content is no longer constructive."

The station's statement also took a potshot at members of militant groups. DZRJ has always been sympathetic to minority groups that need a voice and has never succumbed to pressure. It has fought presidents in the past. We gave the Leftists P30 million of air time and they repay us by smearing us in the press, it said."

On Monday, the program's host Bernie Ramos, a member of a militant group, told the INQUIRER that "warm relations" between the Jacinto family, owners of dzRJ and the family of President Macapagal-Arroyo was the reason for the show's cancellation.

Ramos also maintained that they tackled issues which were "constructive" not only for a particular sector of society, but for the general public.

"Management said it's their prerogative to cancel programs that are not constructive. So that means issues like wage increases and increases in electrical bills are not constructive for them. But it's constructive for all," Ramos said.

He also said the first wife of Ramon "RJ" Jacinto, who runs the station, is a sister of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Meanwhile, the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) lambasted the station for canceling Ramos' show, as well as another show "Ngayon Na, Bayan," saying this was proof of government harassment of media.

"This is government harassment plain and simple. Ramon Jacinto, an ally of the President, eagerly sacked the two hard-hitting programs at the mere wish of his patron Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. He and the administration effectively muted two platforms where the basic masses particularly the peasants and workers can air their grievances and postulate their demands," said Danilo Ramos, secretary general of KMP.

Ramos and his group also called dzRJ as "DZ Rotten Journalism."

Gov't printing office slashes costs by half

FROM BEING AN AGENCY MARKED FOR abolition, the National Printing Office (NPO) is becoming a showcase for policy reform and success for the Arroyo administration's campaign against graft and corruption.

This, according to its spokesperson, can now be said of the NPO based on results of the latest biddings it conducted and the reform policies now in place since the new management took over barely a month ago.

NPO spokesperson Sofia Tampoc said that the results of the latest bidding conducted by the agency for carbonless paper, the single biggest item on the NPO annual procurement plan, saw a dramatic cut in prices by 48 percent compared to its previous price.

"The fact that the NPO spent P28 million for carbonless paper alone last year, the results of the last bidding already meant savings worth P12 million for the NPO this year," Tampoc said.

An earlier bidding for White Bristol Board and Manila Golden Kraft, two different types of papers used by the NPO in the printing of accountable and standard forms, also resulted in price reduction by 59.50 and 51.84 percent, respectively.

For these three items alone, the government already saved P12.67 million based on its procurement record last year, unprecedented in the entire 104-year history of the government printing outfit, the NPO press statement said.

The NPO is under the Office of the President through the Office of the Communications Director and the Philippine Information Agency.

A few years ago, then Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin called for the abolition of the NPO by cutting its budget to scrap bottom and allocating nothing for capital outlay.

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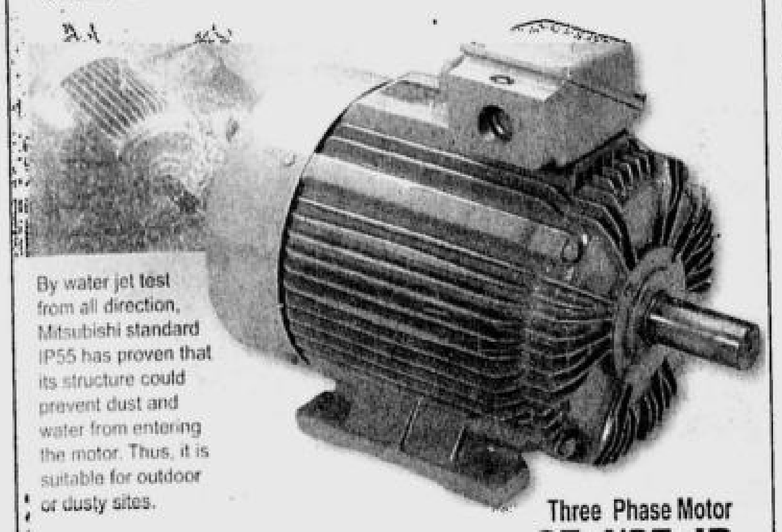

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'Gov't faces jobs deficit …

From page A1

Clarence Pascual, a senior researcher at the Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN), yesterday said that the jobs created actually fell short of the government's target of generating 1.5 million jobs a year until 2010 so that the unemployment rate could be brought down.

Pascual pointed out that the surge in the number of underemployed persons—those who are seeking additional jobs aside from the ones they already have—that became evident in 2005 was carried over in January.

Pascual explained that if the number of underemployed was added to the 2.8 million jobless (3.9 million if those not actively seeking jobs are included), there would actually be more than 10 million Filipinos, out of a 36-million workforce, who are looking for work.

"This does not include men and women who leave the labor force in the absence of clear job prospects," he said in a statement. "Clearly, the government faces a jobs deficit of crisis proportions."

Rene Ofreneo, director of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations at the University of the Philippines, said the numbers clearly showed that employment in the formal sector was shrinking and employment in the informal sector of the labor market was growing."

"In other words, jobs in those areas of the economy that contribute to economic growth are deteriorating while more and more people are being employed on a part-time basis doing menial jobs in agriculture and household work," Ofreneo said.

He said around 65 percent of the country's workforce was employed in the informal sector.

In a commentary, the Philippine Business Leaders Forum, part of the Economist Intelligence Unit, said a significant number of jobs had been lost in the construction, health, manufacturing and mining sectors.

Loss in key areas

"These are key areas in asset formation—including social assets as well as fixed assets—and the decline would appear to place the country in further jeopardy," the commentary said.

NSO data showed that the fishing sector lost 5,000 jobs last year, mining 9,000, manufacturing 18,000, health and social work 32,000, and construction 73,000.

The area that saw significant employment growth last year was farming, hunting and forestry where 479,000 jobs were created, followed by private households which contributed 102,000 net new jobs.

"Whether these are salaried jobs or subsistence employment (where people are paid in rice or corn) is not spelled out but we suspect much of it would be the latter," the commentary said.

Part-time jobs growing

The NSO reported that part-time jobs increased by 651,000, which accounted for the bulk of new jobs. Unpaid family workers posted an increase of 389,000 or 52 percent of net job creation while number of own-account workers rose by 263,000.

The Forum commentary said: "Altogether, these numbers do not suggest to us a picture of robust economic health but rather indicate employment degradation—higher status jobs being lost and replaced by low paying ones—and migration to subsistence employment."

Danny Edralin, chair of the Alliance of Progressive Labor, said the concentration of employment gains in low-productivity and low-pay sectors such as agriculture and private households indicated "poor quality of job creation."

"The government's publicity machinery claimed success in employment generation but deliberately evaded the fact that part-time jobs accounted for the bulk of new jobs created," Edralin said.

"The current jobs crisis has been festering in the last seven years as labor has been left behind in the current growth cycle," he said.

Jobless growth

Unemployment increased along with the growth in the gross domestic product (GDP), according to Pascual.

Government data showed that unemployment rose to 11.8 percent in 2004, easing slightly to 11.3 percent last year. GDP growth accelerated from 3.3 percent in 1999 to 6.1 percent in 2004 but decelerated to 5.1 percent in 2005.

"The flip side of rising unemployment and GDP growth is improving labor productivity. Indeed, labor productivity has been rising since the mid 1990s in contrast to the trend in the 1980s and early 1990s," Pascual said.

Edralin lamented that the rising labor productivity did not translate into higher wages and family incomes because of soaring unemployment.

Family income shrinks

The overall index of compensation in establishments with 10 or more workers has been flat over the last 10 years, he said. The index for the manufacturing sector shows a steep drop during the same period.

The latest data also showed that the average family income in real terms shrunk 14 percent between 1997 and 2003 despite the steady rise in productivity.

"Labor is condemned to lurch from one crisis to the next," said Edralin.

Mission critical jobs

Ofreneo said the loss of "mission critical" jobs was becoming serious in many sectors of the country's economy.

"A lot has been said and written about the loss of health professionals in this country," he said.

"Now, we are starting to hear about the impact the loss of pilots, in particular captains, and engineers from the aviation sector."

The president of Philippine Airlines, Jaime Bautista, warned the company's $1-billion, six-year expansion plan could be cut back if the airline failed to halt the exodus of pilots.

Some 140 senior pilots and over 1,900 aircraft mechanics have left for higher paying jobs overseas in the last five years.

From 2003 until the end of February this year, PAL lost 78 of its senior pilots to foreign competitors. *Reports from AFP and Jerome Aning*

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LUSH FAÇADE of the Manila Seedling Bank provides the clean and green lungs in the middle of the polluted concrete jungle.

QC wants seedling bank out …

From page A1

"This is plain harassment. They want this corner for the commercial malls, with the intention to create a concrete jungle at the expense of ecology and the environment," Manila Seedling Bank president Lucito Bertol told the INQUIRER in an interview.

He said the foundation was exempted from all forms of taxation, duties and imposts by Proclamation No. 1197, issued by former President Ferdinand Marcos on Sept. 7, 1977.Half a million seedlings could become homeless once the foundation is ordered to vacate its 7-hectare office cum garden on the corner of Edsa and Quezon Avenue.

The city treasurer had auctioned off the prime property in December last year, after serving a final note on delinquency to the foundation for failing to pay its property taxes from 1978 to 2005.

Since no one made a bid, the city stands to assume ownership of the property, unless the Manila Seedling Bank manages to pay its dues, including interest and fines, before a mandatory one-year redemption period.

The redemption period lapses in December. Should the foundation fail to settle its obligations until then, the city automatically acquires the property, Endriga said.

No notice for taxation

According to Bertol, the Manila Seedling Bank has not received any notice for taxation the past 28 years, until Endriga served a statement in October 2005, saying the foundation had failed to pay real property taxes from 1978 to 2005 totaling P59 million.

"We have never been charged any real property [taxes]. This is the first time Quezon City has tried to collect from us," Bertol said.

Endriga dismissed Presidential Decree No. 1197 exempting the foundation from tax duties, saying it had been nullified by more recent laws, among them the Local Government Code, that declares any commercial-use property taxable.

He said the Manila Seedling Bank—which had been propagating and giving free seedlings for reforestation for almost three decades—was considered commercial, since it leased out the property to tenants, such as a florist's shop.

Endriga added that the property was actually owned by the National Housing Authority, with which the foundation is entangled with in an ownership squabble that has been brought to court.

He said the city had been serving its tax notices to the NHA for the longest time, but no one had been paying the taxes. It was only recently that the city treasurer's office undertook measures to recover the unsettled obligations.

Henry Sy interested

According to Endriga, many developers are "very interested" in the prime property, particularly Henry Sy, who has signified his intention to bid for it.

Already, plans are afoot to convert the area into a commercial complex, with a high-rise condominium and parks, as part of the city's "Central Business District" project.

"Putting up a mall is not among the initial plans since it might compete with SM City North Edsa (which Sy also owns)," Endriga said.

The CBD spans the North and East Triangles that are bounded by East Avenue, Edsa, North Avenue and Elliptical Road, including the Veterans Memorial Hospital.

If plans push through, and the city secures a presidential proclamation declaring the area a business hub, the city will open to developers several hectares of prime property, which will be infused with as much as P1 billion capital for development.

No green spot

"[This will] spell the demise of that green spot right in the heart of the metropolis that acts as a giant sponge tin purifying the polluted atmosphere in the area," the Manila Seedling Bank said in a statement.

The foundation helped in the reforestation of the La Mesa Dam Watershed, Marikina Watershed, Meralco Jala-jala project, Mt. Samat Agro forestry project, Philippine Nuclear Power Plant project, Bataan Industrial Tree Plantation and the Mountain Resort in Baras, Rizal.

Endriga said the development of the Manila Seedling Bank property was by no means final. There was still the slim possibility that the foundation would pay up, he said.

In fact, the seedling bank was identified as one of the "challenges" to the development of the area, according to a primer on the CBD obtained by the INQUIRER.

Talk to the President

Other possible stumbling blocks include the large number of informal settlers and a standing contract between NHA and New San Jose Builders Inc. and Robinson's Land, for the lease development of a 37-ha property near the MRT depot.

The city is already in talks with the NHA for a possible joint management of the CBD, Endriga said.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., on the other hand, is on the verge of bringing the matter of the CBD President Macapagal-Arroyo, he said.

"Considering that the President is preoccupied, we need proper timing [for the proposal]," Endriga said.

PETA wins special prize from Japan Foundation

THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL Theater Association recently received the Japan Foundation Special Prize for Culture and Arts, the first time that a Philippine organization or individual was so awarded by the 33-year-old Japanese non-profit cultural organization.

PETA was cited for "carrying out educational and community-building efforts through its theatrical productions" and undertaking "collaborative initiatives with artistic and civic groups in Japan and many other Asian countries.

The foundation also cited the theater group for having played "a key role in the formation of an Asian art network."

The award came with a P1 million monetary gift which Peta said it would use to complete the building of its Theater Center.

The group has just built a Theater Center and School with the support of local and foreign funders, particularly the Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) of the Netherlands which undertook the funding of a major part of the project.

Since 1979, Peta has been working with many Japanese organizations and individuals, starting with the Kuro Tento or Black Tent Theater (BTT), through a regular exchange of artists and co-productions.

Peta has also developed lasting and meaningful ties with individual Japanese artists, educators, advocates, students and community folk. Regular exchanges continue to this day with the annual Asian Peoples Theater Workshop that began 10 years ago.

EMPEROR'S HAND. Cecilia B. Garrucho, president of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), receives the congratulations of Japan's Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko on behalf of PETA, which won the Special Prize for Culture and Arts given by the Japan Foundation.

Quake hits but causes no damage

A STRONG EARTHquake shook the central Philippines early yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, the government's earthquake monitoring agency said.

The magnitude 5.1 temblor occurred at 7:43 a.m. and was centered undersea, 45 kilometers off San Jose town in Mindoro Occidental province.

Seismologist Ric Mangao of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the epicenter was 21 kilometers (13 miles) below the earth's surface, relatively shallow but not powerful enough to cause a tsunami.

He said the tremor, which was felt at the popular resort island of Boracay, was caused by the collision of two fault lines. Some aftershocks were expected, he added.

The Philippines is part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" where earthquakes and volcanic activities are frequent. *AP*

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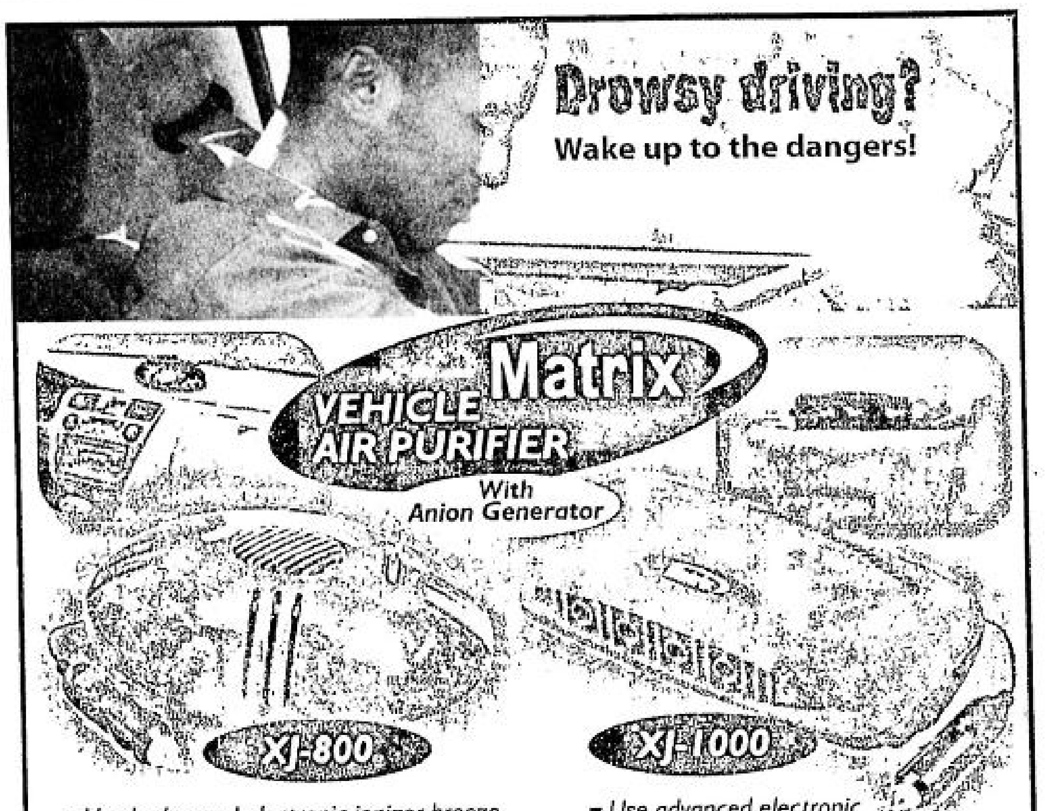
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Eradicating poverty a 'utopian dream,' says antipoverty exec

From page A1

mance [of the economy], a lot of our countrymen will continue to be poor. We have to appreciate that we cannot totally eradicate poverty. We cannot eradicate it, but we can manage it."

To prove his contention that the total eradication of poverty is a pipe dream, Ampatuan cited the existence of poverty in the United States as well as in other developed countries in Asia and Europe.

It appears to be common practice among administration officials.

In January, Augusto Santos, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the "poorest of the poor" were not easy to find in Metro Manila.

"All modern cities in the world have pockets of poverty within them, and that's not easy to locate. Even in rural areas, it's hard to say if a family is going hungry just by looking at their house," Santos said.

Bright and not

Ampatuan, who belongs to a politically influential family in Maguindanao, attributed the futility of fighting poverty to the poor themselves.

"Our people have different levels of skills. Some are industrious, some are lazy; some are bright, some are not too bright; some have advanced skills, some have poor skills," he said.

Let's be realistic

Ampatuan added: "It doesn't mean the Filipino is lazy, but there is truth to that. There is reality that some people cannot get out of it because of their own personal account. Let's be realistic about it. Look at your neighbors and how they conduct their lives, and how another neighbor can be productive with just P500."

But he pointed out that being poor should not be taken "negatively" because even "the Bible praises being poor, and it even calls the poor 'children of God.'"

'Proprosperity'

Ampatuan would rather call the government's antipoverty program a "proprosperity" program because, he said, these projects were aimed at preventing more Filipinos from falling below the poverty line.

As many as 21 million Filipinos live below the poverty line, per the NAPC estimate.

Ampatuan said at least half of the P35-billion fund for pump-priming (or P17.5 billion) had been set aside for antipoverty programs, meaning the government would spend P833 a year (or a little over P2 a day) for each poor Filipino.

He said the government preferred strategic intervention—or helping the poor indirectly through social services projects and food subsidies—over giving money directly to them because it would have "a very negative implication in terms of values" and promote mendicancy.

'I forgot'

When asked about the threshold level or the daily spending of a poor Filipino, Ampatuan was clueless.

"I hope I have that data. I forgot the threshold," said the man whom President Macapagal-Arroyo named to the post eight months ago.

His staff had to scramble for a computer to get at the poverty threshold, which has been set at $1 a day.

In January, Santos said the Neda was getting inputs from the NAPC to ensure that its list of indigents was "credible."

THE LAST TWO HUTS standing are only a few meters away from the mudslide that buried Guinsaugon.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Not a dry eye in Guinsaugon on 40th day

From page A1

thought she would not survive but she did.

Sandy said that when he failed to find his mother at the landslide area, he went to Barangay Malibago because he was told this was where the retrieved bodies were brought.

Like fish

"I really broke down when I saw the naked bodies, including my mother, lying on the cold cement floor. I was torn to pieces," he said.

"*Giunsa man ni ninyo akong nanay ug tanang patay, mora man ug mga isda sa tiangge gipanglaray. Daghan kaayong mga tawo nagtan-aw morag mopalit ug isda. Wala man gani salipdi bisag panapton* (What have you done to my mother and all the fatalities? They are like fishes in the market, being lined up. The many people were looking at them as if they were going to buy fish. They were not even covered by a piece of cloth)," said Sandy, amid sobs.

St. Bernard Mayor Maria Lim, who was also crying, apologized to Sandy and to the other relatives of the landslide victims.

"I'm very, very sorry. The tragedy was so huge, we didn't know what to do. I, for one, admit that I didn't know what to do," Lim said.

GATEWAY TO GUINSAUGON was lined with children looking on at a procession of rescuers and Good Samaritans who descended upon this barangay in a remote Southern Leyte town. EDWIN BACASMAS

Moving on

Ten students from Guinsaugon, who were studying in Cebu when the tragedy happened, offered flowers at the cross, which was put up as a memorial two weeks after the tragedy.

Four of them, who graduated this month, offered their graduation hats by placing them at the foot of the cross.

In his homily, Maasin Bishop Precioso Cantillas asked the relatives to pray and to move on because their loved ones were already in heaven.

"I urge you to pray for their sacrifices. Like Jesus, who sacrificed [His life] for us," said Cantillas.

Boy, 5, electrocuted

Danger, however, still lurks in the disaster area.

In Barangay Hinabian, 5-year-old Jodel Telen was killed and his older brother Jonathan was injured on Friday when they washed their feet in a stream, not knowing that a live wire was in the water.

Jodel was buried at the Barangay Catmon Cemetery on Saturday morning while Jonathan, 17, was recuperating at the district hospital in nearby Anahawan town.

The boys' parents and six other siblings had been staying at the Barangay Catmon Elementary School since killer landslides wiped out neighboring Barangay Guinsaugon on Feb. 17.

The Telens were among the evacuees from Barangay Hinabian after their village was declared among the disaster-prone areas in St. Bernard.

Their turn to cook

According to their neighbor Carpo Natonio, Jodel, Jonathan and their father, Mario, left the evacuation center for Hinabian in the afternoon of March 24.

The two boys went to gather firewood because it was their turn to cook, while Mario wanted to graze the cow.

Mario stayed behind and told his sons to head back to the evacuation center, said Natonio.

On their way back to Catmon, Natonio said the two passed by a stream to wash their feet, not knowing that a live wire from a mini-hydro electric power was in the water.

Burned fingers

Jodel was the first to dip his foot and received an electric shock. Jonathan tried to pull his brother out of the water but was thrown off by the tremendous electric shock.

Bro. Hansel Mapayo, one of the religious volunteers at the evacuation center, said Jonathan had been under observation by the physicians although he remained weak and suffered burns in his fingertips.

Check live wires

Upon hearing of the news, Gov. Rosette Lerias ordered the Southern Leyte Electric Cooperative to check their electric lines in barangays declared disaster areas, as well as in evacuation centers to avoid similar incidents.

Mapayo expressed his sadness, saying the incident could have been avoided if the evacuees had not returned to their villages since these areas had not been declared safe.

Still, some went back during the day either to tend to their farms or to graze their farm animals and returned to the evacuation center in the afternoon.

Those staying at the Catmon Elementary School were evacuees, mostly farmers, from Barangays Magatas and Hinabian that had been declared disaster areas following the landslides at Guinsaugon.

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BIR files ₱78-M tax case vs accused smuggler, sis

By Armand N. Nocum

THE BUREAU OF Internal Revenue yesterday filed another tax-evasion case against suspected smuggler Samuel Lee and his sister Thelma for allegedly understating almost a billion pesos worth of importations in 2001 and 2002 to evade the payment of P78.4 million in taxes.

At the same time, prosecutors at the Department of Justice said they would be meeting with BIR officials to expedite the resolution of the four tax-evasion cases against Lee that were filed last year.

In the latest case against Lee, operatives of the BIR's Run After Tax Evasion (RATE) program said Lee and his sister, who are president and vice president, respectively, of Manila Hometextile Inc. (MHI), had declared purchases of P3.4 million in 2001 and P976,123 in 2002.

Perjury, too

But a check with the BIR's audit information, tax exemption and incentives division showed that the firm had made importations of PVC materials, woven fabrics and PVC leather, among others, amounting to P431.1 million and P555.7 million in 2001 and 2002, respectively.

"Initial findings disclosed that MHI willfully and deliberately understated the amount of its purchases and importations ...," the BIR said in the tax complaint it filed at the DOJ yesterday.'

The under-declaration of the business transactions by the MHI resulted in tax deficiencies of P43.7 million and P34.6 million in 2001 and 2002, respectively, or a total of P78.4 million, the BIR said.

MHI, which has been in operation since 1997, is engaged in the manufacturing, buying, selling, importing and exporting of textiles, supplies, tools, machines, appliances and equipment.

Apart from the charge of tax evasion, the BIR also slapped the Lee siblings with perjury charges for "willfully filing" the MHI's income tax returns in 2001 and 2001 "containing false information regarding its sale, income and purchases." The BIR said Samuel and Thelma Lee were signatories of the tax return forms.

In a recent Senate hearing, the names of Lee, Lucio Lao Co and Vicky Toh surfaced as among the country's allegedly big-time smugglers with purported links to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Last year, the BIR filed tax evasion cases against Lee's alleged dummy firms—Columbia Sports Phil., Nitoka Industrial Corp., Mitsuko Phil. Corp. and the Pine River International Corp.

In October 2005, however, senior state prosecutor Edwin S. Dayog dismissed the P151-million case against Columbia, saying those charged "were not the responsible officers."

The BIR asked the DOJ to reconsider its decision on the Columbia case amid reports of a P10-million bribe being paid to the justice department. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Dayog have denied the payola allegation.

"I have not seen even a centavo from that supposed payola," Gonzalez said. He denied knowing Lee or that anyone from Malacañang had called him to intercede in Lee's case.

Lee was arrested in early March and charged with smuggling and for corrupting a public official after he allegedly attempted to bribe the arresting officers.

The case caused an uproar after a Quezon City prosecutor ordered the release of Lee. The prosecutor amended the release order after the arresting police officers complained and filed charges against Lee who is now out on bail.

In a telephone interview, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said he and DOJ prosecutors would meet with the BIR to expedite the resolution of all cases against Lee.

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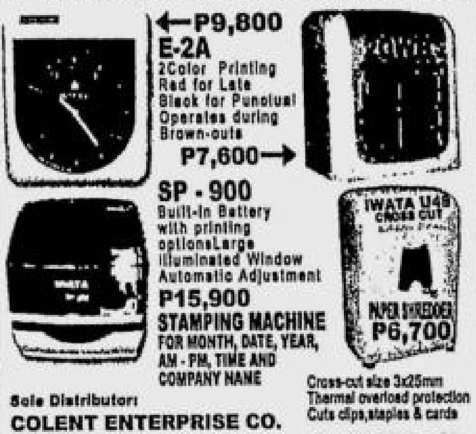

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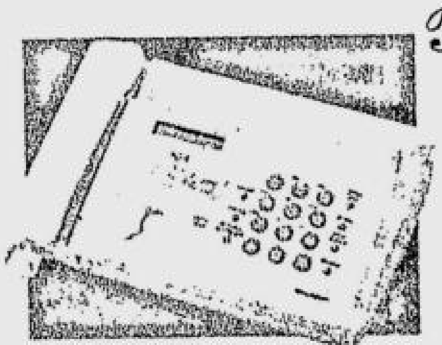

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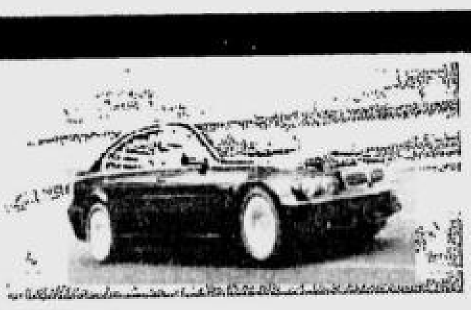

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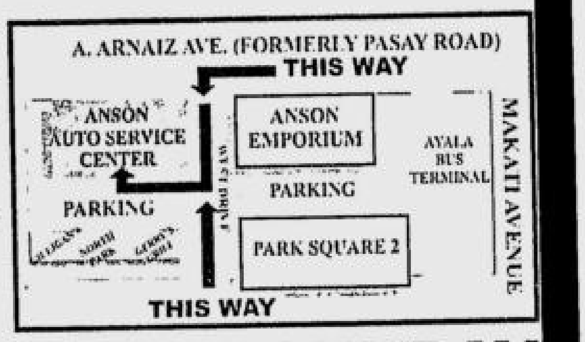

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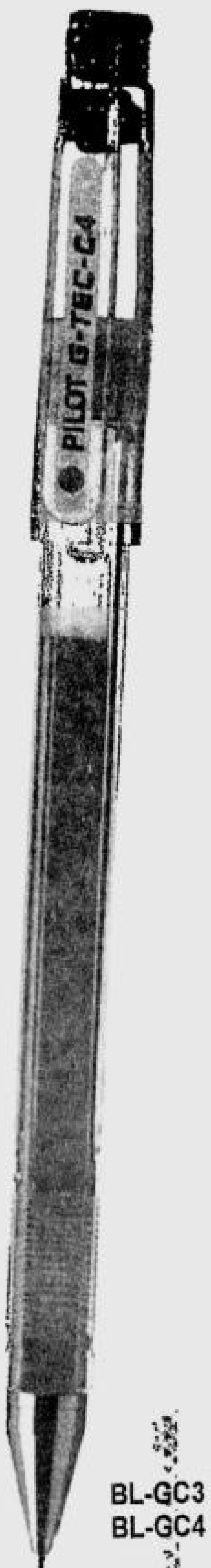

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Gov't operating like an employment agency

From page A1

of the nature of politics where you're paying back political debts or *kawawa naman 'yung mga anak 'wag na nating tanggalin,"* David said.

That is why, David said, "inefficiency has never been checked. Why? Because the Constitution provides for security of tenure."

But "security of tenure is not the problem. The problem is—there's no clear monitoring of performance," David said.

Today, government remains the nation's biggest employer, claiming more than 60 percent of the national budget for salaries alone," pointed out former Sen. Francisco Tatad in his book "A Nation on Fire."

"Even (US computer giant) Microsoft would have long gone under if it spent this much on personnel," Tatad wrote.

The opposition stalwart noted that "almost every business firm has been forced to retrench, but government continues to grow in the opposite direction—without any corresponding growth in quality of its service or personnel."

When interviewed last November, David acknowledged that the commission had yet to come up with an updated and official count of state workers.

The 1.4 million-plus total is "as good as we can guess," David told the INQUIRER.

Ghost employees

The CSC estimate did not include, for obvious reasons, a still undetermined number of "ghost employees" in various national and local government offices nationwide.

In the absence of a data base, the commission has not looked into the irregular practice and the resulting government losses, financial or otherwise.

One hundred five years after the country's civil service was formally established, the ideal size of the bureaucracy has yet to be set.

David said "the ideal size is not something that anybody can say. First, because there are agencies that are understaffed and there are agencies that are overstaffed."

Tatad, who served as information minister during the martial law years, said Filipinos "need a smaller, leaner, but more efficient and effective government whose standards of performance and pay are comparable with those of the private sector."

"Government must not try to do what the private sector can do at lower costs and better. We must privatize every office or function that can be privatized, and professionalize every office or activity that government chooses to retain."

The state, the ex-senator asserted, "must not employ more people or spend more money or time than the private sector would otherwise hire or spend on a particular office, project or program."

"The bureaucracy must be isolated from politics to ensure the continuity of programs, while maintaining the highest levels of professionalism and patriotism. Every President is free to appoint his Cabinet and key political advisers. But the bureaucracy as such should not be treated as political plum by every incoming administration. It should be answerable only to civil service laws and not to the caprices of every new set of power-holders. This is the only way to build a strong bureaucracy and a highly competitive private sector," Tatad said.

Contract

The CSC, which has quasi-judicial powers, is bent on professionalizing the bureaucracy, but there are times the executive department unreasonably blocks its efforts.

Like in 2002 when the commission and the budget and finance departments banded together and came up with a scheme aimed at professionalizing further the civil service.

David recalled forwarding to Malacañang what she called a "contract" requiring all presidential appointees to government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) to be career service eligibles.

The plan, a brainchild of David and then Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, supposedly covered all executive branch managers from the rank of director 1 to undersecretary.

However, after more than three years, Malacañang has not decided on the so-called contract.

David is appalled at the inaction, seen by some CSC insiders as another example of the administration's outrageous inefficiency.

Despite the letdown, the CSC has not lost its grip on the campaign to professionalize the civil service.

The executive department had asked the commission to give priority to the lower levels in its ongoing program.

Three levels

Wrong strategy, David said, asserting that for the CSC campaign to succeed all three levels should be equally and adequately covered.

In the civilian bureaucracy, the "first level" groups clerical, trades, crafts and custodial service positions.

Professional, technical and scientific positions belong to the "second level."

The "third level" refers to the career executive service or managerial positions. A little over 40 percent of the 6,000-plus third level posts are still held by "noneligibles."

It is an entirely different story in the first and second levels where "eligibles" hold at least 80 percent of positions.

The commission has acknowledged that its professionalization efforts "have not reached far in the noncareer service category as political patronage persists as a stumbling block."

"This was most evident in local government units, which employed more than 118,000 or 60.6 percent of the total number of noncareer employees nationwide. A large contingent of the LGU workforce were either casuals or contractuals at over 94,000 or 80.1 percent. Presumably, these were political protégés who did not meet the qualification standards prescribed by the CSC for the regular positions."

Merit and fitness

The CSC has reported that "because of continuing efforts to professionalize the bureaucracy, career employees far outnumbered noncareer personnel."

"This translated to a total of more than 1.25 million (86.5 percent) being employed on the basis of merit and fitness, thereby enjoying security of tenure. In contrast, 13.5 percent or over 194,000 were employed based on factors other than the usual test of merit and fitness," the CSC said.

In the 1999 study, the commission said the bureaucracy had achieved a high degree of professionalization considering the high percentages of permanent and career service employees.

"This means the prescribed standards for positions particularly in the first and second levels are met by the incumbents. However, it is saddening to note that in the managerial echelon, more than half of occupied career executive positions are held by noneligibles.

It would have been more motivating for the rank and file to perform under the helm of people who likewise have met their respective qualification standards," the CSC said.

Women

Other CSC inventory findings:

- Women accounted for 53 percent of the bureaucracy, especially in Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11.

Men outnumbered the females in Metro Manila, Region 12 and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

It was in national government agencies that the presence of women was strongly felt (59 percent). But they accounted for just 33 percent of the workforce in GOCCs and 42 percent in LGUs.

The Muslim culture, prevalent in at least two regions in Mindanao, continued to manifest reservations in allowing women to engage in work, thus the preference for men.

Leadership, direction and control were strongly held by men. The fact remains that in the bureaucracy, executive and managerial positions are their domain.

Disparity

The disparity "might be worked out with the issuance of CSC Memorandum Circular No. 8, which seeks to promote gender equality at all levels in the civil service, more specifically in third level positions."

- A majority of state personnel belonged to the 36 to 40 age group, but their median age was 41.

This implied that at most, they have 24 more years to serve the government before retirement and will benefit from training and other human resource development interventions given them.

- At least 77 percent of government personnel were married. Seemingly, more married workers pursued government service because it connotes stability.
- On the average, a government employee stays in the service for at least 16 years, meaning many of them were recruited during the last years of the Marcos regime and the Aquino administration.
- The bureaucracy was predominantly run by Roman Catholics who numbered more than 1.16 million.

All other religions like Protestants, Islam, Iglesia ni Cristo and Born-Again groups were measly represented.

Public school teachers

Public school teachers, at more than 30 percent of the entire workforce, have remained the largest occupational group in the civil service.

The CSC said "the education sector, which always ranked high in the government's priority list, cannot be sacrificed to operate with a limited workforce."

"Thus, despite the prevailing economic difficulties, they (teachers) were a perennial exemption from any streamlining policy, which prohibits filling up positions or hiring. Consequently, their count continuously increased," the commission said.

Female teachers reigned supreme in numbers at more than 80 percent of the total teaching positions.

Many of these teachers were between 51 and 55 years old but those in their 30s were not far behind.

Like the teachers, the hiring of Philippine National Police personnel was never stopped despite the stingy government budget. There are more than 115,000 PNP members.

In her 10-point agenda, President Macapagal-Arroyo vowed to streamline the civilian bureaucracy to make government services more efficient.

However, it is not clear how far government will go in trimming down bureaucracy's excess fat.

What's clear is that ordinary employees, not political appointees holding managerial positions, will bear the brunt of the next streamlining program.

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Mercury in Sorsogon bay a hoax, says 2nd UP study

A SECOND TEST BY UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines scientists had validated earlier findings that Sorsogon and Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay are safe from mercury contamination.

The UP-Natural Sciences Research Institute (UP-NSRI) study dated March 24 and made public by Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee late last week tested water sediment samples. The first UP-NSRI study, issued earlier this month, tested surface water and fish samples.

These two studies, according to Lafayette Philippines in a press statement, confirmed the five earlier tests done by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources all showing that the mercury contamination in Sorsogon, as claimed by antimining groups and blamed on Lafayette's Rapu Rapu project, never existed.

The hoax, however, hurt Sorsogon's own fishermen as people stopped buying fish, Lafayette said. Lee, Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzalez and other Church and local politicians have mounted a campaign to inform their constituents that it is safe to eat locally caught fish.

The Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Albay, led by Vice Gov. James Calisin, had also asked the National Bureau of Investigation to identify the people who submitted contaminated fish samples to BFAR.

BFAR's adverse findings on these fish samples were eventually used to fan the hoax. But BFAR had said these findings were not scientifically reliable since it was only those who submitted the fish who knew where, when and how the samples were taken.

The company had said it could not have caused any mercury problem since it does not use mercury in its operations and Rapu Rapu, where it operates, has no mercury problem at all. Rapu Rapu is across the sea from Sorsogon.

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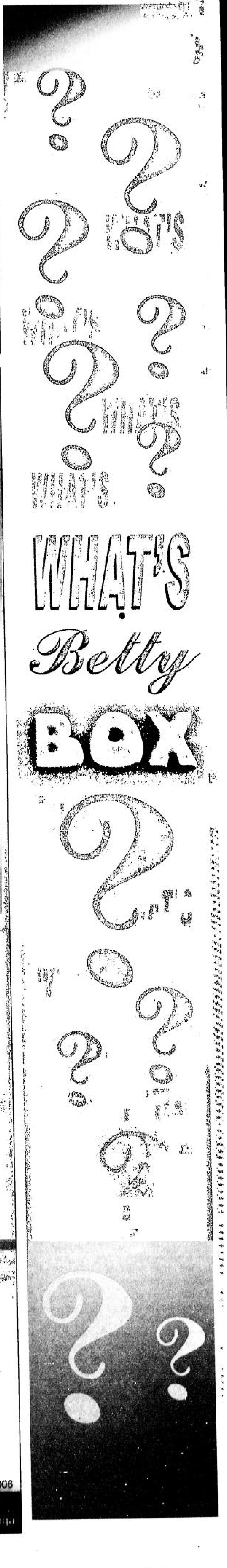

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The rational choice

EDITORIAL

WHAT WOULD IT REQUIRE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION to obtain constitutional change by means of a people's initiative (ironically an effort made possible not by the people but by politicians)?

Three legal somersaults would be needed. The first entails the application of a law which the Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional, at least with respect to the provisions governing people's initiative and the Constitution, and which the Commission of Elections has been "permanently enjoined" not even to consider. The second requires overturning generations of constitutional law by upholding the exotic interpretation that a bicameral legislature ceases to be bicameral when tackling constitutional amendments, even though the Constitution mandates the two chambers to vote separately on all other matters. And third, the Supreme Court would have to repudiate its previous decision, which is always a possibility, but potentially risky for the reputation of its members and the institution itself.

Then the cooperation of the Comelec would be needed. Chair Benjamin Abalos says the Comelec will cooperate. However, during his confirmation hearings, Romeo Brawner said that in the absence of an enabling law, the Comelec has no choice but to throw out any petition concerning a people's initiative. Between the two of them, who is to be believed and who is believable? Abalos? At the very least, the country can kiss any chance of the Comelec redeeming its reputation goodbye. Of course, armed with a convenient Supreme Court reversal, the Comelec would have no problem cooperating with the administration. But that is presuming the Court will cave in.

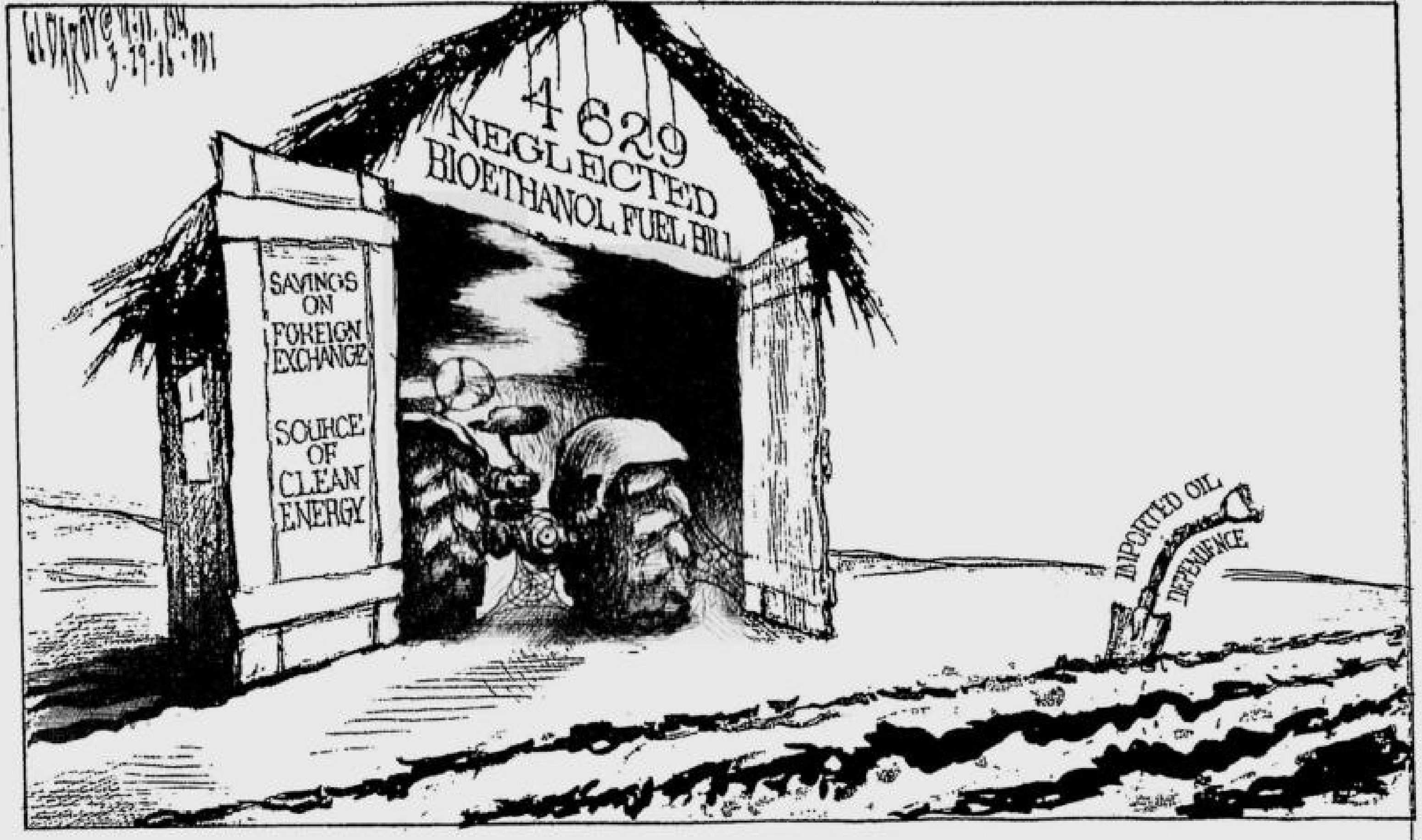
Next, the well-grounded suspicions of the citizenry would suddenly have to disappear. The public would have to be convinced that President Macapagal-Arroyo isn't interested in avoiding a second round of impeachment efforts. And that she hasn't at least toyed with the idea that with vastly concentrated powers between 2007 and 2010, she would be poised to continue her political career as prime minister after that. The country would have to accept that our present crop of congressmen and governors deserve an extra term without going through an election.

Finally, matters would have to be resolved in a plebiscite, which will be hounded with controversy. Unleashing the floodgates of patronage will only discredit the voting process even further; and with every institution—the executive, Congress and the judiciary—so badly compromised by the effort that the entire mechanism of government might just break down. If patronage becomes widely perceived to be an instrument for cheating, then the temptation for the Armed Forces to resolve the situation becomes irresistible. The AFP cannot endure being suspected of being used as an instrument for electoral manipulation yet again.

The desire of many Filipinos from all walks of life and various political camps to reexamine the constitutional structure of our national and local governments can't be ignored. The real question is whether the means adopted by the administration will foster reforms and result in an improved constitution accepted by the people. We do not see how the effort being pushed by the President's minions will do that.

The effort now underway takes too many shortcuts and employs too many tactics that are contemptuous of the Constitution and public institutions to achieve a healthy and unifying change for the country. But all along, the simpler option of calling a constitutional convention has been there. Resisting the call for a convention only underscores the widespread belief that this option is unpopular with the politicians because it offers very little by way of protecting the vested interests of those who are now holding office.

When people say a constitutional convention would be too expensive, they mean it offers little by way of political payoff. When they say it will take too much time, they mean time that is at a premium for a beleaguered administration. We do not think it is fair, proper or decent to hold the future of the country hostage, because of the partisan needs of the President or her supporters. The Senate has already said it would support a constitutional convention. Much of the public would prefer one, too. The only risk a convention poses is to the timetable of last-termers already in office and the President herself.



STL teaches us that crime pays

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

I THINK THE RESIDENTS OF A CITY OR municipality should be the ones who should decide whether or not they should have *jueteng*—renamed Small Town Lottery—on the streets where they live. The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, much less the new gambling lords, has no right forcing people to accept gambling in their neighborhoods even if they (the residents) don't want it. And I say hooray to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte for stopping the operations of STL in Quezon City. In the first place, Quezon City is not a small town—it is a big city—so the Small Town Lottery is out of place there, ha, ha, ha. In the second place, no government agency can operate a house of vice in just any place without the approval of its residents. Can the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) set up a drug den anywhere at its pleasure? Can the government grant franchises to prostitution houses to sell their wares in any neighborhood? The people of Quezon City, I am sure, support their mayor in fighting the STL in their midst.

Already, the PCSO and its franchise holders are behaving like the Mafia dons and the gangsters of old by fighting City Hall and the people who do not want gambling invading their neighborhoods. The Philippines is so big that I am sure the vice lords can find other places where the residents will tolerate gambling; they don't have to force themselves into areas where residents abhor it.

And the PCSO, Malacañang and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Presidential Chief of Staff Mike Defensor, and especially President Macapagal-Arroyo, are taking the people too much for granted by allowing STL anywhere there is an applicant for a franchise. Is our nation now being run by gangsters and vice lords?

I think that there should be a plebiscite in any place where the PCSO intends to set up an STL operation wherein the residents will be asked whether or nor they agree to allow gambling in their midst.

By the way, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn is being rehabilitated as a deodorizer of STL after two Palace running dogs, Puno and Michael Defensor (Ignacio Bunye is the third), grabbed the top spot from him. Hagedorn had gone home to Puerto Princesa, glad to be rid of the monkey on his back, when GMA followed him there the very next day to sweet-talk him into coming back. Defensor, one of the dynamic duo who ousted Hagedorn, quickly issued a statement from Malacañang saying that "we requested (Hagedorn) to continue to implement anti-jueteng operations, in particular, STL as a parallel (effort) to compete with and kill jueteng."

Actually, Hagedorn was not happy over the way his formula for fighting jueteng was corrupted by the PCSO to favor the jueteng lords. His original idea was to provide alternative jobs to the thousands of *cobradores* and *cabos* who would be made jobless by the closure of jueteng operations. The ideal was to give them other means of livelihood, but since the administration is not imaginative enough to create new jobs, the compromise was to operate—temporarily—a parallel STL to wean them and the public away from jueteng. Otherwise, they would continue to work for the jueteng lords while they conducted guerrilla operations.

But his recommendation was to have local government units (LGUs)—not private franchise holders, who would most likely be the old jueteng lords or their dummies—operate STL, with local officials and employees, policemen and military personnel, and even provincial officials and congressmen, getting a percentage of the net income, with the remainder going to their constituents in the form of social services. That way, the officials and employees wouldn't be tempted to accept bribes from colorum operators and instead fight them wholeheartedly because the more the colorums eat into the income of the legal STL, the less their percentage shares would be.

As for the betting public, they would prefer to place their bets with the LGU-run STL rather than with the colorums because their bets would go back to them in the form of social services. Besides, the draw would be held in the public plaza where everybody could watch, as against the colorums which draw the winning numbers in secret. Thus, there would be no cheating.

Instead of following Hagedorn's recommendations, however, the PCSO, because of laziness, just threw the right to operate STL to any applicants for franchises who can pay the millions they are asking for. It is noteworthy that the PCSO does not ban the old jueteng lords from applying for franchises. They don't even have to use dummies; they can operate in their own names. The only consideration is money, money, money. Bong Pineda has already been reported in the newspapers as having cornered the STL operations in Pampanga and neighboring areas.

Thus, the PCSO and Malacañang are rewarding the jueteng lords. They are teaching our people that "crime pays" and that the old accepted lesson that "crime does not pay" is not true anymore. Furthermore, they teach us that "if you violate a law long enough, the government would get tired and legalize that crime."

Thus, the disappointed Hagedorn immediately went home to Puerto Princesa. The President, however, wisely realized that STL would stink to high heavens and asked Hagedorn to deodorize it. But how can he do that unless she tells the PCSO to follow his original proposals to the letter?

Jazz in time

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

I FIRST HEARD MON DAVID SING LIVE SOME years ago at a jazz festival in Galleria. A series of jazz artists was scheduled to perform there that month, and Mon appeared with the group that included Cooky Chua with Affinity, Mishka Adams with the Blue Echoes, and several others. I had heard Mon sing before, of course, on CD. But I wasn't quite prepared for the real thing.

Mon sang "Nature Boy" and a couple of other songs. "Nature Boy," written by E. Ahbez, was originally sung by Nat King Cole but was popularized by the movie "Moulin Rouge" which had just played to local movie houses a year or so before. It's the song where you find the lines, "The greatest thing you'll ever learn/ Is just to love and be loved in return."

Mon sang it with remarkable silkiness and depth, his voice breezing past the highs and lows like a bird winging blithely through the gullies and hills of a shimmering landscape. You knew you were in the presence of talent.

That is not so easy to say in a country teeming with talent, or indeed with musical geniuses. "Genius" is not a word I am using too loosely here, especially so in a festival that showcased it in all its resplendence. With Mon, as with other musicians who have mastered their craft, you are no longer looking at virtuosity—they are past that. You are looking at artistry. You are looking at, or hearing, something that goes beyond the instrument they are playing, whether that is keyboard, or strings, or voice. There is a point at which the instruments begin to act independently of their players, becoming incantations that allow music to leap to life and bedazzle us.

I remembered this after I read on our front page last week that Mon had won the London International Jazz Competitions last week. I know only as much of the details as the other readers of our newspapers; he won't be back till next week. He opened with a few bars of an ethnic tune, shifted a cappella to "Nature Boy," and went to sing "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Lullaby of Birdland." Mon himself would say later, "I was in a trance." A feeling all true artists know whatever the profession. Which includes sports: Basketball players themselves talk of being "in the zone," a reference to the Twilight Zone, where strange and often magical things happen. At one point, Mon said, he knew he had connected with the audience, and the music, or muse, which or who are one and the same thing, just took over.

What can I say? I wasn't all that surprised it happened. With talent like that, you knew Mon was going places. Our common friends would later tell me he is living proof of Edison's aphorism that genius is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration. He believes in hard work, and buckles down to it every day. You can't find someone with more discipline, a friend tells me. At 52, he's still trying earnestly to learn, he's still trying to get a crack at perfection. Of course, few of his friends will agree the inspiration is just 1 percent. Sheer industry doesn't always do the trick.

On top of everything, it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy. A well-known and respected fixture in the jazz landscape, having played practically all the jazz joints in this country, Mon is one of the most laid-back and unassuming creatures you can hope to find. To say that he does not announce his presence with trumpets is to understate things. He hovers in the background, is quick to smile, and presses his conversation gently. There must be something to that Biblical story about the exalted being humbled, and the humble exalted. I'm happy for him.

And for the countless other musicians of this country whose stock has suddenly increased by leaps and bounds, with, I can only hope, the most salutary effects on their livelihood. I'm especially happy that Mon did well in a jazz competition, recognition in that one field of music having eluded us thus far. We already have a Cecile Licad in classical music, a Lea Salonga in musical theater, and countless divas in pop songs, all storming their world with their abilities. It's time we had someone doing that for jazz. If I know Mon, he would be first to balk at being put in the same class as Licad and Salonga, but what the heck, he deserves it. As do some of the truly brilliant jazz artists in our midst, who are barely able to eke out a living playing their kind of music.

There are too many of them, but some of those I do know who easily qualify in that class (my monumental apologies to those I do not know) are Tots Tolentino, who plays magnificent sax, Joey Quirino, Butch Saulog, Ria Villena Osorio, keyboard players all (Ria, a UP music grad, is a prodigious composer as well as player; I saw her recital last year which featured her compositions from ethnic to jazz to classical, and she's only in her middle 20s!), Aya Yuson, Johnny Alegre, Mike Villegas and the great Noli Aurillo, guitar players all (I once heard Noli play the entire orchestral arrangement of Paul McCartney's "Live and Let Die" on solo guitar!), Colby de la Calzada, Dondi Ledesma, Simon Tan, Louis Talan, bass players, and Koko Bermejo who plays drums with a frown of concentration on most of these bands and poses puzzles and musical quizzes with a smile of delectation afterward.

It just breaks the heart to see them play to half-empty (and that would be lucky!) jazz joints, which themselves are disappearing faster than the musicians can play their notes. I can only hope Mon David's breakthrough will spark a resurgence of sorts, awaken interest in the kind of music they play, break the carapace of indifference or even hostility to music that actually asks the listener to listen.

Strange and magical things do happen in the zone,

Impregnable stone walls

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE COULD NOT HAVE been a worse time to launch the people's initiative campaign to revise the Constitution than now, when other options for Charter change and/or for an early exit of President Macapagal-Arroyo appear to have closed.

There are in reality two parallel campaigns under way. The first seeks to revise the Constitution with the aim of replacing the presidential system with the parliamentary system. The second, which calls for less fundamental changes, seeks to cut short the President's term at the earliest possible time, if not immediately.

Some citizens, worried over the political and economic consequences of the seemingly endless stalemates, have begun to see that these two trends could be rechanneled toward a convergence at a middle ground, that is, a historic compromise that will put to rest the issue of the legitimacy of the Arroyo presidency, and restore political stability. But the voices searching for the elusive so-called "middle ground" are so few that their forlorn voices are drowned by the clamorous political rhetoric.

Among these voices can be counted former President Fidel Ramos, who has proposed since July last year a timetable for a shift to the parliamentary system by June 2007 (a few months from now) that could at the same time open a face-saving exit for President Arroyo; and Sen. Edgardo Angara, who only last March, proposed a joint resolution of the House and the Senate that would enable Congress to amend the Constitution but limit the changes to revamping the Commission on Elections and cutting the terms of both President Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro to extricate the nation from its gridlock. As Angara put it, "If we agree on this with the House, we will file a joint resolution to shorten the term of both the President and Vice President so that it will usher in a fresh election. Then the question of legitimacy and mandate will be laid to rest."

No sooner had Angara released the trial balloon than it was shot down by his Senate colleagues who have formed a solid phalanx to oppose a proposal by Speaker Jose de Venecia who has lined up most of the House behind a resolution seeking the convening of the two chambers as a constituent assembly to revise the Constitution. The option of constituent assembly has already hit an impasse, and so has the option of convening a constitutional convention, favored by the senators.

Both Ramos, Angara and the few who are attracted to the idea of a shift to the parliamentary system and at the same time cutting short Ms Arroyo's term by 2007 share the same objectives. Angara's proposal seeks in effect a snap election, an objective of the militants in the streets. What's sad is that the motives of those who share these basic objectives—a system shift and early exit for Ms Arroyo—have become suspect. They are suspected of promoting self-serving political agenda, a suspicion that sidetracked serious examination of the merit of the proposals as a way to end the legitimacy crisis.

The impasse between the two Houses over Mode 1, the constituent assembly, and Mode 2, the constitutional convention, drove the President to the third option spelled out in the Constitution: a people's initiative. This was the last card played to break the impasse.

Two other options—both outside the constitutional framework—to put an end to the legitimacy crisis have been tried and failed. These are people power to force the President to resign and a coup d'etat. These two modes appear to have fizzled when not enough people massed in the streets to unseat the Arroyo administration and the military proved to be divided. This division is bad for the government because it means that it rests on a fragile foundation of military loyalty to constitutional civilian authority.

The next question is, if the people's initiative fails as a constitutional remedy, where does the crisis move? Back to the streets? Another coup d'etat? Is it reasonable to redirect the crisis back to the two other blocked modes of Charter change? This means that the failure of the people power and coup options may have opened the way to a historic compromise. Can the Senate and the House and the President negotiate the terms of Charter change under Modes 1 and 2?

When the people's initiative campaign was launched, the President and her opponents began to stonewall on maximalist positions. The President's maximalist position is that she serves out her term until 2010. She insists on shifting to a parliamentary system, and has given hints that the question of cutting short her term might be considered in the transitory provisions of a new constitution.

The maximalist position of her equally uncompromising foes is that she has to go at the earliest possible time. They have no patience to wait even until 2007. But they have a problem. They don't have the force to carry out their demand or to drag her out of Malacañang feet first.

Thus, the crisis has arrived at a showdown of two maximalist positions. It has reached a deadlock that gives urgency to the search of a middle ground for a political compromise. The people's initiative has brought this issue to a head.

Compromise is not possible when the opposing sides are not willing to abandon their conviction that winning political conflicts in a democracy means that the winner takes all. The obvious negotiating point that has emerged from these stalemates is the terms of settlement of the 2007 exit.

Warring spouses

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

WHEN A MARRIAGE BREAKS DOWN AND THE principals go the court, both parties always claim they're looking out for the best interests of the children, the real "innocent parties" caught in the crossfire between the estranged spouses.

So it is with Chinoy couple W. and N., whose 10-year marriage is in its death throes. Married in 1995, W. and N. have been separated since 2003, when W. "secretly" filed a petition for nullity, alleging psychological incapacity on N.'s part because of the following reasons: she could not get along with her mother-in-law (his mother), she was a compulsive shopper bent on squandering his earnings, and she had been unfaithful.

The last accusation N. simply laughs off. "How could I be having an affair when I'm with the children 24/7?" she asks. Since she got married, says N., she's devoted her life to maintaining her marriage and family, looking after her three children, ages 10, 8 and 6.

But she easily concedes the first ground. From the beginning, N. admits, she and her mother-in-law have been at loggerheads, but she believes it would have been the case whoever W. married. "He's the eldest child and only son," N. explains, but even given traditional Chinese mores, what a psychologist called the "symbiotic ties" between W. and his mother is something else.

As the years passed, and the children were born, W., despite a promise he made soon after the wedding, continued to insist on living in the family compound with his parents (his father died in 1999). N. stepped up her campaign to get W. to move to a separate dwelling, but as W.'s mother boasted: "You cannot take my son away from me because he was born from my birth canal and he suckled at my breast." Why the old woman insisted on keeping her son's family so close to her is mystifying, since she also alleged that every time she caught sight of N., she would feel palpitations and her blood pressure would rise.

* * *

"I GAVE it my best try," N. says of her attempts to salvage her relationship with W.

They went for marriage counseling not just once but several times. At first, they went to see a priest, but W. stopped showing up when he felt the priest was "favoring" N. Then they started seeing a psychiatrist who had been recommended by W.'s friends, but again he called a halt to the sessions when the psychiatrist told N., "You don't need to see me, it's your mother-in-law who has a problem."

Friends with Couples for Christ scheduled a counseling session with some "elders" to get W. and N. to work things out. When the situation had been diagnosed as stemming from N.'s continuing unhappiness at being under her mother-in-law's thumb, "W. promised in front of the elders that he would buy a house and that we would live on our own," recalls N.

But once again, W. reneged on his promise, and in frustration, N. pleaded for a "cooling off" period of six months, moving into a condominium unit owned by her own family and took the children with her. W. showed up some time later, begging to be taken back, and for a while, N. allowed him to move into the condo.

* * *

IT turns out, though, that it was around this time that W. decided to file a petition for nullity. N. found out about his plans only after she read the contents of his secretary's notebook, where her husband had detailed, among others, plans to hire a private investigator to monitor her activities, have her phone tapped and transfer stocks and other conjugal assets and properties to "dummy" individuals and groups.

While the petition for nullity was still pending in court, W., through his car dealership company and his secretary, claiming to be the owners of the two notebooks, filed a case of theft against N. On a Friday afternoon, while N. was in a hospital looking after her ailing father, police showed up with a warrant of arrest for N., and it was only after her lawyers feverishly worked out bail that she narrowly escaped spending the weekend in jail.

But it would not be the end of the harassment that N. underwent. W. filed a case of "kidnapping" against her, claiming she had spirited out the children without his consent. In January 2004, as N. was preparing to move into her parents' home, W. walked into the condominium unit where N. was staying and, over the objections of the maids and the children, proceeded to take everything in it, including appliances and even their clothes. Some time later, he managed to open their safety deposit box and took everything in it, including heirloom jewelry that had been given to N. long before her marriage.

Friends would later tell N. that W. had vowed "to strip N. of everything, including the children." He also added that he would be "willing to sacrifice this family if N. continues to refuse to bow down to my mother."

* * *

THE LATEST legal skirmish in their annulment case involves the amount of monthly support that W. is obligated to provide. While N. has demanded P80,000 a month, W. appealed—and the judge agreed with him—to slash the amount to P35,000, less than half what N. asked for. W., or rather, his mother, has also committed to pay for the children's education and health needs.

At present, W. also enjoys custody of the children on weekends, although the children themselves allegedly told the judge hearing the case that "you can't force us to see our father if we don't want to."

A mutual friend recently approached N. and told her to seek the help of the media allegedly because "knowing W., he is beginning to think that it would be far cheaper to hire someone to kill you than have to keep paying" his way through the legal system.

If that's true, then this case of warring spouses goes far beyond the private sphere.

'Useless information'

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHILE BROWSING IN THE CANNED GOODS section of Rustan's Supermarket recently, I saw someone going through each and every can of sardines on the shelves. Frustrated, he caught a clerk and asked if they carried "Mabuti" sardines. Now that was a name I have not heard in a long time. The young clerk had never heard of it and looked at the customer as if he came from Mars. Then, I heard the man exclaim, "*Ano ba itong si* Mommy, *parang naglilihi.*" He then wondered whether there was such a brand, so I answered that it was a brand familiar to old people.

We used to have Mabuti sardines in our pantry, a regular supply from the late E. Aguilar Cruz who gifted my parents with these slim, rectangular, golden cans with the distinctive "Mabuti" trademark screaming in red on the top. Mabuti sardines were imported from Portugal. They were made specifically for the Philippines and could not be acquired anywhere else in the world, not even in Portugal where they are presumably canned under a different name.

Browsing through pre-war Philippine magazines make me see the food my parents and grandparents ate, the products they used, and even the cod liver oil they were forced to take as children. Cod liver oil now comes in jelly-like capsules and was something I fed my dog. In ancient times, this came in a bottle whose box carried a famous picture of a fisherman in a raincoat carrying a giant cod. This was known as Scott's Emulsion and it was familiar even in Rizal's time. We are told that when he was holding clinic in Dapitan, he would always prescribe "Emulsion de Scott."

Then there are familiar brands still extant on grocery and *sari-sari* store shelves today, like Bear Brand Milk. These now come in cans and blue tetrapaks, but in my youth, the cans were wrapped in brown paper. In my childhood, some people still called Bear Brand under its Spanish name "Marca Oso."

I was amused to find Bear Brand advertisements in the 1926 Philippines Free Press and I couldn't help copying out the text of one ad that claimed: "Bear Brand Milk is the milk of the healthiest cows in the world, the cows of the beautiful valley of Emmenthal, Switzerland! For the sake of your children's health as well as yours, insist on this brand—the guarantee of wholesomeness as well as purity." How come it never crossed anyone's mind why the bear on the trademark feeds her cub with canned cow milk from a bottle complete with a "nipple" or *chupon*? This was obviously the age before the breastfeeding campaigns that insist that breast milk is best for baby.

Today we have different kinds of milk that come in liquid and powdered form. We cannot even imagine the days when there were other choices for milk. Apolinario Mabini was partial to carabao milk, and after his exile in Guam, he feasted on tainted *gatas kalabaw* in Manila and died of cholera.

Milk was such an issue in the late 19th-century Philippines that one of the research papers Antonio Luna undertook after he returned from his studies in the Institut Pasteur in Paris was on the purity of carabao milk. Cow milk was given such a premium that cows were imported from abroad and were considered newsworthy. One of the headlines in the January 1926 Philippines Free Press was "A King comes to the Philippines." It was not human royalty but a cow. King Prospect Bonheur was a Holstein-Freisian bull, with pedigree from Segis Pietertje Prospect, the world's greatest milk producing cow which allegedly averaged 100 lb of milk per day for two years. Less than one percent of the 25 million cows in the United States at the time produced 100 lb of milk in any single day during their entire productive life. The rich product of this "Queen of Milk" (one wonders whether there is a "King of Milk?) was packaged and known under the Carnation brand. So this King Prospect, at eight months old, was the "youngest of the royal family." The cow was imported by Don Tomas Rosales y Requena of Cotabato. Does this royal cow still have descendants in Mindanao? That's another story.

A researcher in the future who will go through my papers in the archives of the University of the Philippines will find a lot of notebooks and note cards filled with obscure information like the above. There is so much useless information lying around and it takes some skill to weave all these loose strands into one coherent narrative. I have made a career from Rizal's notebooks, and someone in the future can make another career on my notes alone. Some samples: I have notes on Dwight F. Davis who is a forgotten name to Filipinos except for the coveted Davis Cup given out for tennis. Davis was a former US secretary of war whose portfolio at the time included the Philippines. Davis himself was one of the first three defenders of the trophy; later there were the Aragon brothers who competed for the cup.

There is a whole card on Isabelo de los Reyes whose photograph appeared in the 1926 Philippines Free Press. De los Reyes was shown posing with his 23rd child! There are also quotable quotes on his being an anarchist and details about how he made a living by organizing weekly dances where the daughters of laborers (he was a labor leader) worked as "*bailarinas*" who were paid 10 centavos per dance. He also owned a shooting gallery with air rifles. Oh, if only the world appreciated useless information, I would be rich.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Chopsticks tax

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

IN 2000, THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGram ranked the Philippines 77th among 174 nations with the human development index (HDI), a composite measure that looks at how nations fare in terms of economics and social progress. That year, China lagged far behind us, ranking 99th.

By 2005, we had dropped to 84th while China had climbed to just a notch below us, ranking 85th.

These shifts in the HDI rankings should alert us to the need to look at how China is pursuing its development, and see what lessons we might pick up.

English?

Two weeks ago, I wrote about how we waste so much time debating on whether to use English or Filipino in schools as a key to national development. I argued that the way to go is to start with local languages (Tagalog in Tagalog areas, Cebuano in Cebuano areas) and then move on to teach students a national language, Filipino, and later offer English and other foreign languages as options.

Priority to a national language was the choice many countries took in our part of the world, and now they're reaping the benefits. Contrary to popular misconceptions, we can and should teach the sciences and math in Filipino and local languages. That was the way Japan progressed, as did China.

Now comes news that China's education ministry wants to offer English in primary schools. Their education minister first announced that some 100 million Chinese schoolchildren would learn English. The vice minister announced the next day that actually there would be some 300 million children benefiting from the English lessons.

How did the public react? Hong Kong commentators, always outspoken, criticized the move, saying China didn't need 300 million speakers of English. A few million would suffice, they pointed out, mainly to be able to conduct business with the world and pick up their technology.

That's food for thought. I know that the Philippines has a different situation, with the way we're trying to export workers and get more of the outsourcing market, such as call centers, but I've already written about how we need to improve our standards not just for English but also for science and technology, and we can't do that if we continue to have a muddled language policy, one which has left Filipinos proficient neither in English nor Filipino.

In my last column on language, I pointed out that once we learn to respect ourselves, especially with a national language, the world will begin to talk **with** us, rather than **to** us. Note that even as more Chinese learn to speak English so they can move their nation forward, people elsewhere are now scrambling to learn Chinese. In London, 40 primary schools have already entered into a twinning program with counterparts in Beijing, so their students can communicate by computer and teach each other English and Chinese. Last month, Gordon Brown, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer (more or less equivalent to the US treasury secretary), visited China and said that he expects every school in Britain—from the primary to university level—to find a Chinese "twin" within the next five years.

Environment-friendly taxes

Let me get back to China, to another rather unique aspect of their development strategy. Their Finance Ministry recently announced a package of new consumption taxes that will go into effect in April. One of the measures calls for a new 5 percent tax on disposable wooden chopsticks. With China producing some 45 billion pairs of chopsticks each year, that could mean a lot of revenues. But that is not the main reason for the new tax.

To produce all those chopsticks, 25 million trees are chopped down each year. Chinese officials recognize that there are long-term costs for this massive use of trees, and hope that the additional tax sends a message to people about the need to reduce their use of disposable chopsticks. Besides the chopsticks, wooden floor panels will also be taxed 5 percent, again a bid to save trees.

The new taxes have elicited mixed reactions. Environmental activists are skeptical, pointing out that chopsticks and wooden floor panels aren't the main reason for deforestation. One irreverent Internet blogsite on environmental economics asked if a toothpick tax was in the offing.

But the new tax measure has impressed other environmentalists as a sign that the Chinese government is seriously looking at how environmental degradation might derail its plans for development.

Together with the chopsticks tax, China is also increasing taxes on cars with engines bigger than 2 liters, the rate to increase from 8 percent to 20 percent. On the other hand, cars with engines between 1 and 1.5 liters will have their taxes cut from 5 percent to 3 percent. New taxes will also be imposed now on various fuel products.

China is now the world's third biggest vehicle market, after the United States and Japan. The cars account for a third of China's total oil use, and is a major contributor to air pollution.

First World

The adjustments on car taxes have a strong environmental component, but these tax reforms are also meant to reduce the conspicuous consumption among China's new rich, which has contributed to growing social discontent as the gap between the rich and the poor widens. China's development has been phenomenal, but some 200 million Chinese still live on less than $1 a day.

Besides the hike in luxury car taxes, there will now be a 20-percent tax on luxury watches. Yachts and golf equipment will now be taxed 10 percent.

It looks like China is indeed serious about pursuing a development strategy that's well described in its China Modernization Report 2005, a study put together by Chinese experts from various fields:

"China must follow a way of co-ordinately developing its industries and agriculture, improving ecosystems in the process, adopting high technologies along with appropriate ones and pushing forward its national economy in line with globalization."

I know that sounds like a lot of rhetoric, but recent developments around the use of English in schools, and the new environment-friendly taxes, do suggest the Chinese government is serious about getting on the right track with development.

What does strike me, too, is the Chinese's conservatism when it comes to projections on their economic development. The China Modernization Report estimates that China could become a "moderately developed country" by 2050, and a developed country by 2080.

Compare all that to our President announcing, several times now, that the Philippines will become a First World country in 20 years, if we stay on track with her economic program, including her new taxes and now, Charter change.

Not all Indians are into 5/6

I FIND IT RATHER IRONIC THAT a day after a documentary about Indians living in the Philippines was shown on TV—which I felt helped clear up some misconceptions/racist attitudes toward them—I find an article calling them as "foxy foreigners" who "gallop all over town and prey on poor Filipino vendors." (PDI, 3/14/06) The article, which was actually a two-part series, also described the Indians as "invaders" who "victimize" people with their "usurious" operations.

I shall not argue about the legality or morality of "5/6 money-lending," about which I myself have qualms. But I must take issue with the condemnatory tone of the series, which seemed to reinforce racist stereotypes against Indians.

Not all Indians in the Philippines are involved in 5/6. But then the series cited statistics from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and made sure to mention that the businessmen and moneylenders interviewed were Indians. Couple this with phrases like "prey on the hapless poor," and I couldn't help but think that, in the minds of many readers, the series gave the impression that Indians, in general, are people who prey on others. The writers even quoted somebody who described the 5/6 operators as "blood-sucking" and "selfish, cheating moneylenders." Clearly, the writers of the series had no qualms about injecting their own opinion into the article, something I was once told is a big no-no in newswriting.

I wonder what the objective of the series was? Has the 5/6 operation gotten so oppressive that the INQUIRER felt the need to run a series on it? Did not the INQUIRER editors consider the series' impact on the lives of ordinary Indians with legitimate businesses and jobs, who are living here?

One cannot deny that there already exists a kind of racial discrimination against Indians here. The series could only aggravate it.

Another irony was its timing—so soon after the Indian President made a state visit to the country.

I shudder to think of what could happen to me outside my home, as I walk past people on my way to school. People who have read the series most probably would easily spot my "dusky, distinct Indian features," never mind that I am also half-Filipino. And they might also think that I am an "intruder," a "selfish, cheating moneylender," galloping all over town and preying on poor Filipino vendors.

And to think that the INQUIRER once published in the Youngblood section an article of mine, which was about tolerance and the dangers of bigotry.

—AJEET PANEMANGLOR,
24 Madrid St.,
Merville Park Subdivision,
Parañaque City

* * *

This is in reaction to the special series on illegal moneylenders. (PDI, 3/15, 16/06) Illegal lending has been going on for a long time here in Bacolod City. You can see Indians, Pakistanis, etc. on motorcycles with their Filipino collectors or *alalays* every day. They go into lending and collect the payments openly, especially in public markets. No agencies are concerned about their activities. We even hear they are also into drugs (it is not farfetched), so it seems they are untouchables.

These foreigners are now buying real property in exclusive subdivisions like Capitolville, much to the disgust of the old families who have been staying there for decades. Some of them are very arrogant, especially now that they are well-placed.

We call on the concerned agencies, such as the Bureau of Immigration, Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Philippine National Police, to do something about their illegal businesses. Otherwise, sooner or later, it will be very hard to control and check them. They will be a source of graft and corruption.

Also, stores like the 168 Mall in Divisoria are beginning to sprout here, and it seems the city government and the BIR are doing nothing about it.

—MARIA CARLA DE LEON,
Burgos Street, Bacolod City

Why fault GMA for the sins of other people?

THIS IS IN REACTION TO REV. Salvador D. Eduarte's letter titled "Why GMA finds it hard to resign." (PDI, 3/7/06) It is our country's tragedy that most people cannot identify anymore between black and white. People like Eduarte, who are supposed to be models for their Christian followers, should be careful in expressing their ideas.

I am a Catholic but, sad to say, there are also some priests and bishops making accusations, unmindful that they are violating the biblical injunction "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Some nuns also accuse the President as a tyrant but on what grounds? So far, despite several coup attempts, there has been no death, unlike during the rule of President Aquino and President Marcos.

There are those who say that GMA cheated in the 2004 elections. Some say she used public money to advance her personal interests. But can they prove it? All these are just allegations. Besides, there are different people in different positions with different agenda. Why blame the President for these people's fault?

There are worse leaders than GMA, and they are wolves in sheep's clothing. But then I might just as well choose the lesser evil.

I am supporting GMA not for anything else but for the sake of our country. I support her because I find her sincere and she has qualities to lead this poor country duped for a long time by greedy politicians.

If GMA were to be toppled, who would replace her and assure us of genuine service? Could we be sure that he would be a leader brave enough to do anything that's good for our people—even at the expense of his political career? What we have now certainly looks like a Supreme Being guiding some people to take the lead and sparing us from the "masters of deception."

The communists will not stop making noise and sowing chaos, whoever will be sitting on the presidential seat. They want to take control of the government. They have their own agenda. Some traditional politicians also want to grab power for themselves. These masters of deception have joined forces to overthrow the government. If we allow ourselves to be fooled by these people, we may wake up one day and find ourselves in a worse situation.

Let us be vigilant that we do not fall into that tragedy, and let us ask the Lord's enlightenment so we will act to uphold morality and the divine truth.

—JUN DUMALAG,
c/o enuj95@yahoo.com

LETTERS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

A leader like Joshua

THE MOST SERIOUS ISSUE THAT divides our country today is the legitimacy of the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Can impeachment, snap election, people power, coup d'etat, military junta or Cha-cha settle this issue? We have already tried most of these "solutions," but none of them has solved the problems of our country.

Let me therefore remind my fellow Filipinos of what the Bible says regarding this particular problem of our nation: "Moses said to Yahweh, May Yahweh, God of the spirits that give life to all living creatures, appoint a leader for this community, who shall go out and bring them in: so that the community of Yahweh may not be like sheep without a shepherd."

God answered this prayer by appointing Joshua to succeed Moses. Joshua would lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. God knew just what the people needed, so He gave them a wise, experienced, dependable and honest leader in Joshua.

The Filipinos are currently going through the same problem. Let us pray to God that He may give us a leader like Joshua. Let us ask God for direction and then trust Him with His choice.

—DR. LUISITO S. SAN VALENTIN,
The Holy Church of Yahweh,
Quezon City

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Neither absolute nor weaponless

CONTRARY TO AMANDO DORONILA'S claims in his March 10 column, the press is not a weaponless institution. Neither is it correct to say that it has no means to violence. Just like any democratic institution, if wrongly and recklessly used, the press could be detrimental to the survival of society.

The space in his column would not be enough if we wrote down the people, reputations, relationships and resources the media had destroyed through erroneous and malicious reporting.

Please be reminded that press freedom, or any freedom for that matter, is not absolute. It is limited by other institutions and/or the overall society's right to exist.

President Macapagal-Arroyo made the right decision in issuing Proclamation 1017. Her performance, past and present, is more trustworthy than the perpetually destabilizing, poor performance of some media organizations and practitioners, opposition members, senators, rogue soldiers and communists.

—JORGE DIONEDA,
jorgen423@yahoo.com

1017's first media casualty

THE FIRST "MEDIA CASUALTY" of Proclamation No. 1017 was not The Daily Tribune but a radio program. When 1017 was issued last Feb. 24, the management of dzRJ suspended the airing of "Ngayon Na, Bayan!" The station's only award-winning radio program produced by Kodao Productions Inc. used to air from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

"Ngayon Na, Bayan!" engages listeners in an open discussion on political and economic issues. Its anchor was Sonia Capio, with Benjie Oliveros (Mondays), Raymund Villanueva (Tuesdays), Ruth Cervantes (Wednesdays), Fr. Joe Dizon (Thursdays) and Prof. Danny Arao (Fridays) as co-hosts. The Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) has recognized the quality of "Ngayon Na, Bayan!" by awarding it the 2002 Golden Dove Award for Best Public Affairs Program in Metro Manila. The radio program has also been a finalist in the Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA).

Despite the lifting of Proclamation 1017 last March 3, the award-winning radio program remains suspended.

You can help bring it back on the air by calling dzRJ at 895-4546 or 897-8374. Please ask: "Wala na ba ang 'Ngayon na, Bayan'?"

—RICHARD CORONEL,
richard_coronel@yahoo.com

Taking credit for the sunshine but not for the falling rain

THIS IS TO TAKE EXCEPTION TO the news item "Trees keep falling in Aurora forests" (PDI, 2/25/06), which reported that illegal logging is "rampant" and remains "unchecked" in Aurora.

Since the 2004 killer landslides in that province, only two incidents of timber poaching (not illegal logging as reported) have been confirmed in the towns of Dingalan and Baler. Both incidents led to the confiscation of 3.87 cubic meters of lumber. The case, involving the confiscation of 34 pieces of flitches (not logs as reported) is only the third case of illegal tree-cutting in that area in two years. Clearly, three minor incidents in two years do not make for "rampant and unchecked illegal logging."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources continues to closely coordinate with local governments, law enforcement agencies and ordinary citizens (also sources of intelligence reports) to clamp down on illegal logging operations in Central Luzon.

To say that it was "through the efforts of the parish pastoral council that policemen and foresters seized the logs" is the height of hypocrisy and arrogance.

DENR forest protection officers in Dingalan may have acted with dispatch in confiscating the flitches following a tip from the parish pastoral council led by Fr. Antonio Evangelio (not Evangelista as reported), but isn't public vigilance a matter of civic duty even among members of the clergy?

The "motorized boats (observed by parishioners) docking at the bay almost every night to unload logs" were part of the retrieval operations to clean up Dingalan Bay which had been littered with forest debris and washed logs in the aftermath of the landslides. So far, some 260,000 board feet, valued at P7 million or so, have been retrieved—and milled upon the request of the Department of Social Welfare and Development for use in Dingalan's rehabilitation projects. The retrieval operations officially ended on Jan. 6, 2006.

To say that trees are cut on an almost daily basis in Barangay Paltic is downright absurd. The barangay is only a stone's throw away from a DENR unit, which also doubles as a monitoring station. That barangay is even closer to the municipal hall where the local police station is located. There is simply no way that illegal tree cutting can happen there every day without the knowledge of local officials, the police and DENR personnel.

Granting that Father Evangelio's claim is true, that the highly illegal and sinful act of cutting trees goes on in Dingalan every day, isn't this an indictment of the failure of the parish pastoral council, which is supposed to look after the morals of its parishioners?

Father Evangelio wants to take credit for the sunshine; he should as well take credit for rains.

—REGIDOR M. DE LEON,
regional executive director,
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
(Region 3)

Although cut due to limited space, the story carried the side of DENR Aurora officer Benjamin Miña who denied that illegal logging in San Luis, Dingalan and other towns in Aurora was rampant. As for the other points that De Leon raised, these are best for Fr. Antonio Evangelio to respond to.

—TONETTE OREJAS,
correspondent,
PDI Central Luzon Desk

Edsa: an avenue of lust

I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED the INQUIRER one of the vanguards of truth and responsible journalism. But allow me to air my disappointment with a recent article "Your daily dose of Vitamin C," written by Tim Yap. (PDI, 3/11/06) I believe that the Super! section should promote human and cultural upliftment.

Yap, with his whimsical comments on Cindy Kurleto's daring exposure at Edsa, degraded the image and dignity of women. By inviting every qualified male in the capital to feast on Kurleto's billboards—to their concupiscence's content, he converted women into mere objects of pleasure.

Yap suggested a promiscuous attitude when he said, "I don't care how many men share Cindy—we can all have a piece of her." Once again, the woman was presented as an object to be lustfully dissected.

Finally, I disapprove of Yap "rallying" men to Edsa to "send Cindy a flying kiss." Sadly, this statement strips Edsa of its historical and social significance—a symbol of freedom and justice—and converts it into an avenue for unleashing our passions.

—FRANCIS ONGKINGCO,
Kasambagan, 6000
Cebu City

Lost, crumbling, disappearing historic landmarks in Manila

IT PAINS ME TO SEE BEAUTIFUL, and even historic, places in Manila falling into ruin little by little or disappearing.

For example, the University of Santo Tomas campus has lost its beauty. The university itself seems to have lost its sense of history. The small UST press building, one of the oldest buildings in the Philippines, is nowhere to be seen. Years back, the main building was very visible, making for a commanding presence. There was nothing to distract one's view of it. Not anymore, with the campus itself playing host to a slew of commercial establishments.

This, after we have lost the Jai-Alai building on Taft Avenue. I thought that after it was demolished, in its place would immediately rise the proposed Hall of Justice. That was years ago.

Mehan Garden is also nowhere to be seen now. In its place is a parking area. I thought the Metropolitan Theatre will soon be restored. There's a billboard that says so. When will this renovation take place? The building is crumbling.

I hope the concerned government official(s) will finally give historical landmarks serious attention.

—DANTE C. ARGAÑOZA,
B12 L5 Galilee St.,
North Olympus, Zabarte,
Novaliches, Quezon City

Deal with cheats before Cha-cha

IS INQUIRER COLUMNIST BEL Cunanan suggesting that because most politicians, including Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, cheated their way in the last—or should I say, previous—elections (would former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano attest to this?), we should just shrug our shoulders and let bygones be bygones? (PDI, 3/16/06)

If that is the sort of mentality she is promoting, then truly *kaawa-awa nga ang ating lupang hinirang* (our country has become pitiable).

Cheaters—whether they belong to the opposition or to the administration—should be exposed and punished. This is the type of mentality that we should be advocating.

We should get rid of the politicians who cheat their way to power before we even think of changing the political system.

—MARCOS SIBAL,
msibal@cm2r.com

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Gov sees 12M signatures for Cha-cha

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THE PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE OF PROVINCES of the Philippines (LPP) and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) yesterday claimed that they were almost in "striking distance" to their target of 5 million signatures needed to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado said the number of signatures might even reach 10 million to 12 million, or over 30 percent of the total number of registered voters nationwide by Friday, the deadline for the gathering of signatures.

He told the INQUIRER that their nationwide monitoring showed a "massive turnout" in favor of Charter change.

"At this time, we have already gotten the striking distance to the (required) 5 million signatures based on my monitoring and it could even be possible that we have already surpassed it by now while we're talking," Aumentado said.

"We can triple the 12 percent signatures of the total registered voters nationwide, which means that we can get at least 30 percent up and that is more or less 10 million to 12 million signatures," he added.

After gathering the signatures, Aumentado said the Sigaw ng Bayan Coalition would submit these to the Commission on Elections for verification.

Aumentado said that if the Comelec would certify the gathered signatures as valid, a plebiscite would be held within 90 days.

If the yes votes will win, the remaining 12 senators whose terms will end on 2010 and the current members of Congress will constitute themselves as members of an "interim parliament."

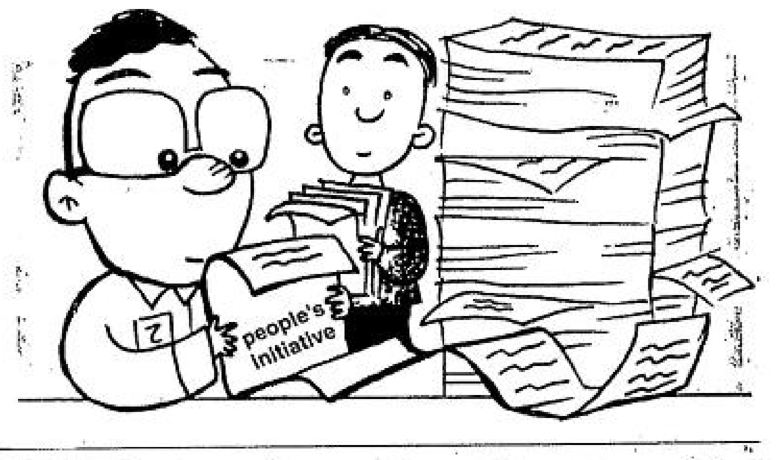
An interim parliament will also make up the body that will amend the Constitution.

Aumentado remained optimistic that the Supreme Court would favor the people's initiative campaign despite questions on the lack of an enabling law for it.

An ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, however, called the people's initiative an "expensive exercise in futility."

"The President is ill-advised about this move. This is an expensive exercise in futility, there is no sense, this is non-sense for me," said former Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia, a member of the 55-man Consultative Commission formed by Malacañang to propose amendments to the Constitution.

Garcia pointed out that the Supreme Court had ruled that Republic Act No. 6735, which provides for a system of initiative and referendum, was inadequate to be used as a basis to change the Charter through people's initiative.



GMA ally says there's fund for Cha-cha

BAGUIO CITY—THERE'S A BUDGET FOR Charter change, an ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo confirmed here last week.

However, Albay Rep. Jose Ma. Salceda, chair of the House committee on appropriations, told government workers on Friday that the President's "real protection" was not a spending plan designed to accommodate constitutional changes but a thriving economy.

Salceda, who described himself as Ms Arroyo's economic adviser, spoke on the last leg of a nationwide advocacy caravan for the expanded value-added tax (VAT), which drew government employees from many parts of Northern Luzon.

He said Ms Arroyo wanted a new, bigger budget for 2006 because it would help Charter change, after Malacañang lobbied for a reinstated budget instead to speed up the conversion of Congress into a constituent assembly.

He said he assumed the committee chairmanship on Feb. 15, yet he was able to get the House of Representatives on Thursday to pass the P1.035-trillion budget plan provided by Malacañang. The House sat on the budget measure for four weeks.

"There are quarters who say the President prefers a reenacted budget. It is flexible enough to allow her to allocate the money, which is why we separated the bill increasing government wages because a reenacted budget is good for Chacha," he said.

Salceda was referring to a P1,000 legislated wage hike that Congress proposed to apply once every year until 2008.

The coalition supporting Charter change has assailed senators who are planning to block a signature campaign, saying that they are not doing what they are elected to do.

Lawyer Raul Lambino, spokesperson of the Sigaw ng Bayan Coalition, said the Senate passed only two laws of national importance last year.

"That is equivalent to P3 billion per law, considering their P6 billion worth of direct budget only," he said. He reacted to the senators' call to stop the nationwide launching of the people's initiative to amend the 1987 Constitution.

"They can not do anything anymore. They are out of the discussion. This depends on the people," Lambino said.

He said that since Monday noon, the Sigaw ng Bayan had gathered 4.5 million signatures.

"This figure does not include Cebu. It includes only the Camanava area in Metro Manila so we expect to gather the required 5 million signatures within the week," he said.

Only 12 percent of the voting population based on the latest election is needed to start the people's initiative. Lambino said the target is 8 million signatures to ensure that the initiative will push through.

He said the Commission on Elections would only need to verify the signatures.

But Sen. Juan Flavier vowed to examine each of the five million signatures, in an effort to stall the initiative. *Vincent Cabreza and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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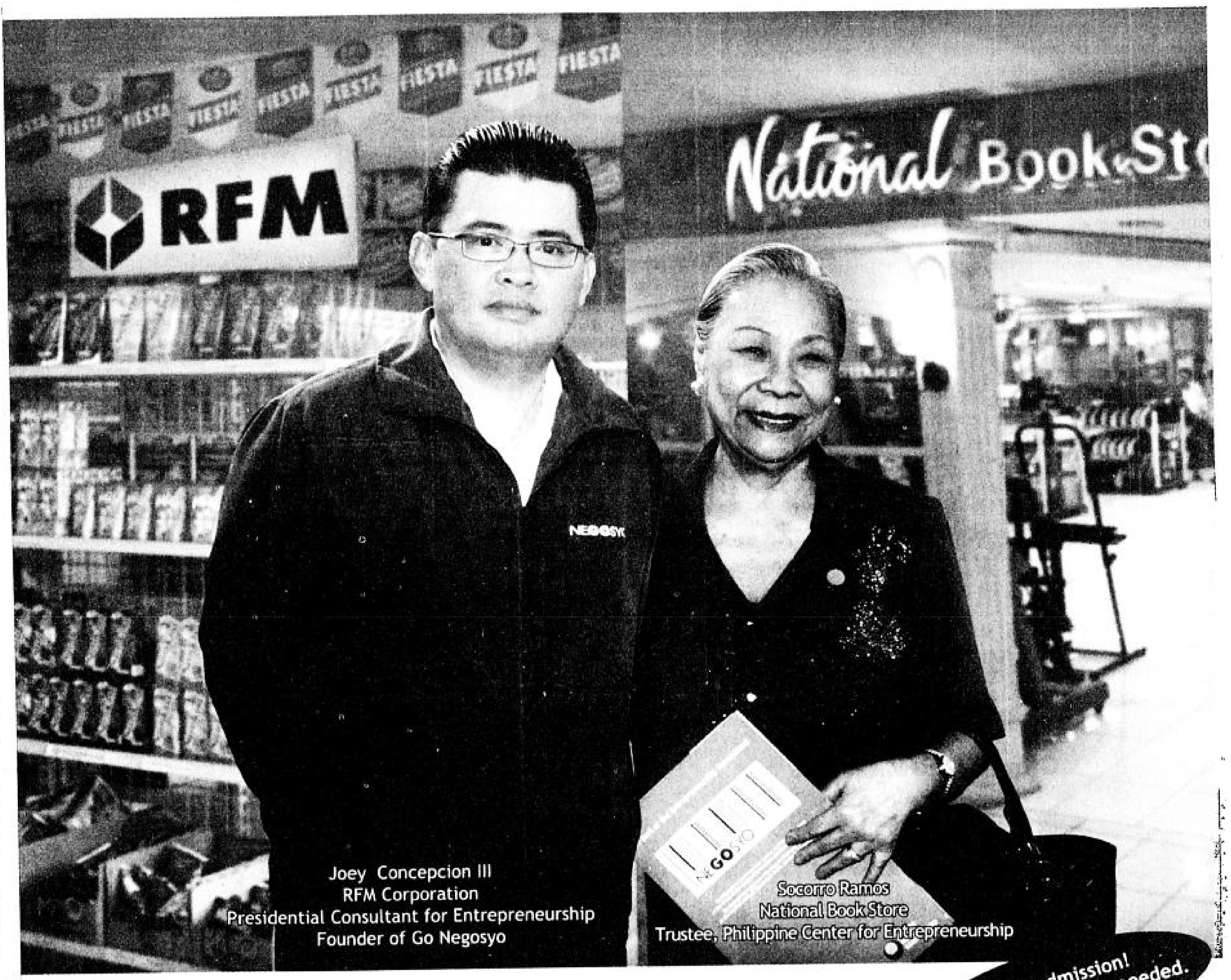

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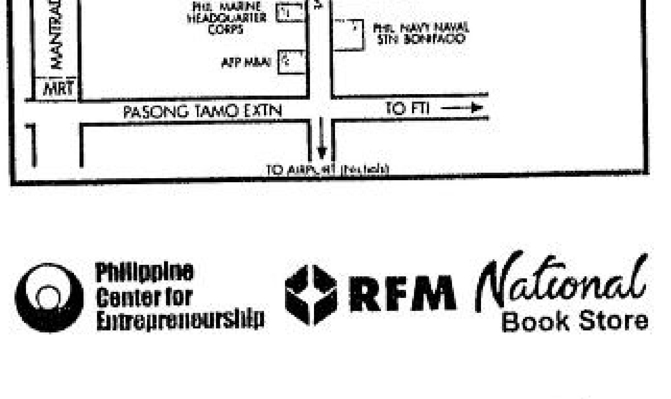
Tulad nina Joey Concepcion at Socorro Ramos, mga leading advocates ng Go Negosyo na minsan ay nangarap na umasenso at gumawa ng paraan para makamit ang tagumpay, kayang-kaya mo rin abutin ang iyong mga mithiin. Basta sapat na kaalaman, sipag, dedikasyon at pagmamahal sa trabaho ang iyong puhunan, tiyak na uunlad din ang iyong munting pinaghirapan! Makilahok na sa Go Negosyo MicroNegosyo Fair at alamin ang sari-saring paraan kung paano umasenso!

March 31, Friday

Ribbon Cutting (Gen. Generoso Senga* • Generals' Wives* • Mayor Sigfrido Tinga with Mrs. Tinga* Mayor Rosendo Capco with Mrs. Capco* • Marissa Concepcion) • National Anthem • Invocation • Go Negosyo Music Video • Opening Remarks (Jose Ma. Concepcion III) • Businessman Manic Manaog (Leo Martinez) • Intro of Program and Interactive Sessions by Host (Carelle Mangaliag) • Forum 1: "MicroNegosyo, Kapangyarihan ng Kababaihan" (Moderator - Karen Davila, Panelists: Mina Gabor* • Jolina Magdangal* • Coney Reyes* • Cory Quirino* • Myrna Yao (NCRFW) • Chit Juan (Figaro) • Cheese Ledesma (The Big Chill) • Jeanne Bañez (Balut Eggspress) • Rachel Alejandro (Sexy Chef)* • Merle Alferez (MSA)* • Myla Villanueva* • Forum 2: "Posibleng Negosyo, Anong Babagay Sa'yo?" (Moderator - Karen Davila, Panelists: Vina Morales* • Diether Ocampo* • Kuh Ledesma* • Les Reyes (Reyes Haircutters) • Richie Cuna (Florgelato) • Rowena Villegas (Wynski) • Roy Chua (PAGASA) • Agnes Car (Women Inventors Assoc. of the Phils., Inc.) • Testimony: "Ang Balansyadong Buhay: Pamilya't Negosyo" (Maricel Laxa) • GAME SHOW with Small Businesses as Prizes • Makatang Nonoy: Isang Tula Handog sa Kababaihan (Ony Carcamo) • Forum 3: "Perang Pang-negosyo, Saan Ka Nga Ba Tatakbo?" [Moderator - Lyn Ching, Panelists: AFPMBAI (Ma. Corazon Dabao) • AFPSLAI • NLSF (c/o Dennis Hamto) • People's Credit and Finance Corporation* • Bayan Foundation (c/o Irma Cosico) • BPI (Ma. Teresa Reyes) • Planters Development Bank (c/o Trixie Pagula) • First Macro Bank (Rafael Serrano) • PSBank (Derick Rasalan) • Phil. Youth Business Foundation (John Walter Baybay)*] • Testimony: "Pagnenegosyo Kasama ang Kapuso't Kapamilya" (Anthony Pangilinan) • Talk: "Kalayaan sa Kakapusan" (Francisco Colayco) • Forum 4: "Radyo Negosyo: Mga Payo at Gabay sa Tagumpay" [(Moderators - Anna Periquet and Carl Balita, Panelists: Arnel Ignacio* • Maoi Arroyo • Rommel Juan (Binalot) • Doyee Tumpalan (First Quadrant) • Ricardo Collantes (Kookai's) • Gov. Lray Villafuerte (Lara's Gifts and Decors)* • Johnlu Koa (The French Baker) • Sandy Javier (Andok's) • Jay Aldeguer (Island Souvenirs)*]• Sum Up / Final Interactive Activity by Host

April 1, Saturday

Skills Demo/Training by DOST, Reyes Haircutters, Le Cordon Bleu, TESDA and TLRC • Polvoron and Pastillas Making by Laura Lazaro (WIAPI)] • Paper Tole by Shirly Fabros (Approtech Asia)] • Meat Processing and Dimsum Making c/o Approtech Asia • Tomato-Based Products c/o Approtech Asia • Preserved Sampaloc and Tea Making by Rita Ritz (WIAPI) • Cellphone Repair c/o Approtech Asia • Basic Haircutting • Cooking and Food Preparation Demo • Sessions on Starting a Business: How to Start a Franchise Business c/o Association of Filipino Franchisers, Inc. • "Lakbay Kainan: Gourmet Para Sa Masa" c/o Le Cordon Bleu • How to Start a Food Cart Business c/o Food Cart Association of the Philippines • How to Start a Salon/Barbershop c/o Reyes Haircutters • How to Start a Home Spa Business • Business Mentoring Booth Mentoring from 11am to 4pm c/o Anna Periquet * final list for confirmation



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Group seeks relief of DENR execs in Bulacan

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—AN ENvironmental group on Tuesday asked the relief of environment officials who allegedly failed to implement Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes' order to cancel the hauling permits of a company extracting marble at the Biak-na-Bato National Park in Bulacan.

Mainly liable for the supposed inaction were Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Jeremias Dolino and Central Luzon Director Angel Bravo, according to Bangon Kalikasan, which has called for the cancellation of the permits.

A day before leaving for a bio-safety conference in Brazil on March 19, Reyes told the INQUIRER by phone that he ordered Dolino on March 17 to direct Bravo to cancel all the ore transport permits (OTPs) issued to Rosemoor Mining and Development Corp. (RMDC).

Reyes gave the order on the heels of a charge by Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz that he was "double-talking" on environmental protection policies.

De la Cruz and villages officials in San Miguel and Doña Remedios Trinidad towns reported that the hauling of marble had continued in the last nine days.

Acting Environment Secretary Manuel Gerochi on Tuesday said that while a written order had been prepared, this had yet to reach Reyes.

Gerochi said he issued a memorandum on March 27, which was received by Bravo on Tuesday.

Efforts to confirm if Bravo began implementing the order proved futile. He was not in his office and his mobile phone was off.

In the memo, Bravo was ordered to explain why OTPs continued to be issued despite complaints from the provincial government.

He was also ordered to refrain from further issuing permits pending an investigation of the alleged environmental degradation and other violations within the (Mineral Production Sharing Agreement or MPSA) area of RMDC.

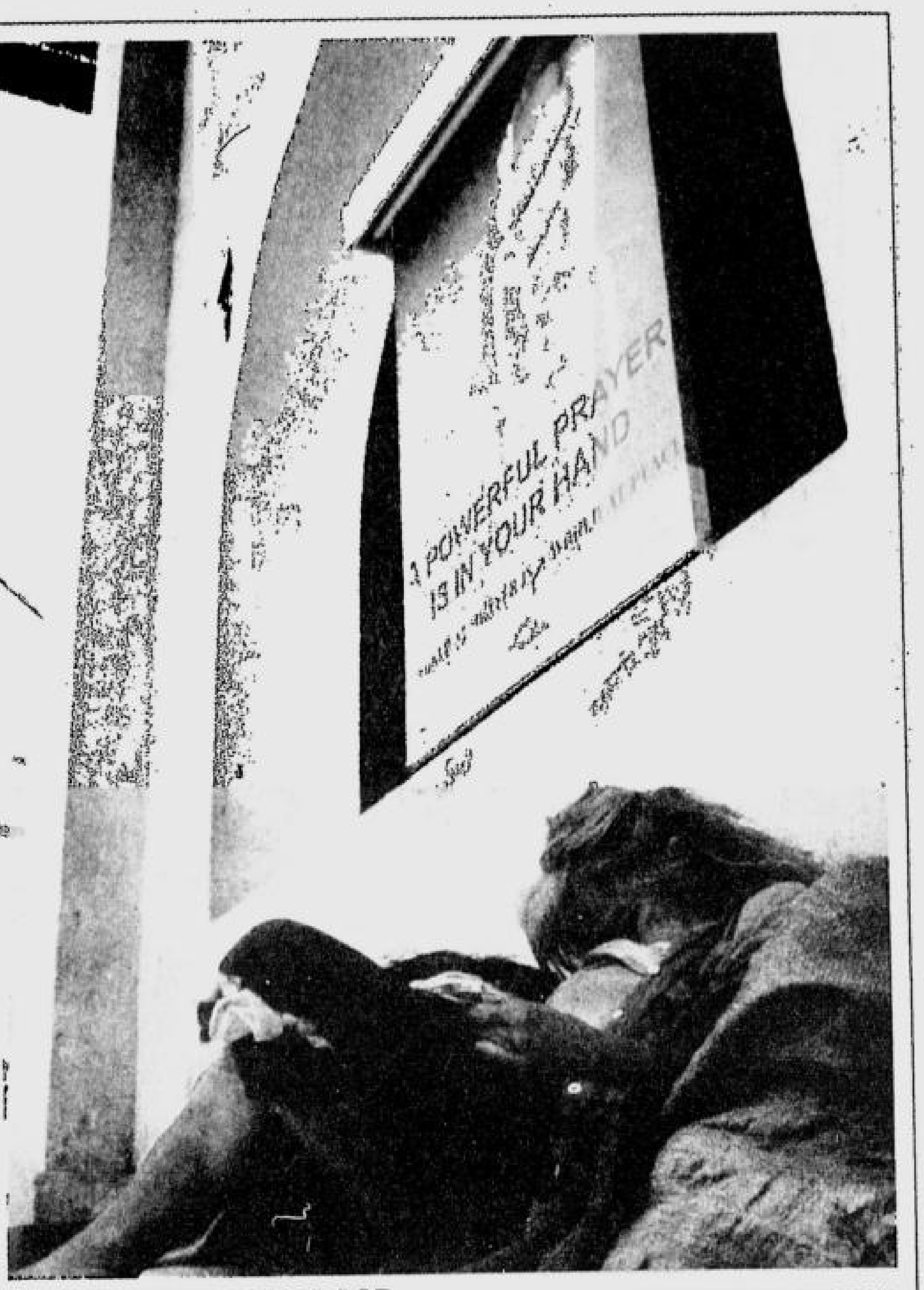
He was instructed to retrieve any remaining marble blocks covered by the OTPs.

Relieving MGB officials, Gerochi said, was within the authority of Reyes.

RMDC president Constantino Pascual on Tuesday said the OTPs issued to his firm "remained valid" because its MPSA No. 188 continued to be in effect. The MPSA was signed by then Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez in 2002 although the Supreme Court had yet to rule on the cancellation of RMDC's Quarry Permit No. 33 by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Pascual was released from jail on Tuesday after the court cleared him of theft and qualified theft charges filed by his relatives who were claiming ownership of RMDC.

Bangon Kalikasan noted a pending request with Reyes to cancel the MPSA of RMDC. "All other influential or powerful groups will no longer be able to exploit the resources in the area," it said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



KNOCKING ON GOD'S DOOR ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

A homeless and mentally ill man finds a spot to rest in front of the Archbishop's Palace in Iloilo City after a day of roaming Jaro District and begging for alms.

Communities true test of mining, says exec

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—While the national government has laid out a favorable legal and regulatory climate to revitalize the mining industry, the real test will still be in the communities, a top official of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines said.

Benjamin Philip Romualdez, CMP president, said mining companies must "demonstrate sincerity" that they are also capable of environmental care and sustainable development.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, on the other hand, wants to "give the mining industry a chance to prove itself" as mining firms start 23 projects and 37 explorations worth $8.5 billion, Romualdez said at a seminar here of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines last Friday.

The CBCP has assailed the Mining Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 7942) for its alleged threats to the environment. It has decried the industry's records of accidents before the law got the nod of the Supreme Court.

The law, upheld with finality in February 2005, opens full ownership of local mining projects to foreign investors, renewing interests in the industry.

The industry contributed 2.14 percent to the country's gross domestic product in 1985, declining by 27 percent in the 1990s, trade data showed.

The CBCP statement, according to Romualdez, will have "very little effect on the government's policy."

Earlier, the government said it was going only for "responsible mining" and that firms would be required to put in 10 percent of their gross income to environmental protection.

Romualdez, who noted that the industry was adopting "best practices," said the CMP continued to take on capability-building measures such as training on technology, transparency and social responsibility programs.

The total mineral wealth in the country has been estimated at $840 billion, with a third of its 13 million hectares considered geologically prospective for mining.

"It's a total shame not to take advantage of the blessings," Romualdez said.

He suggested that the government "invest more" in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources so that the agency would be able to do its functions, mainly in the "proper implementation" of the mining law at the local level.

Romualdez said he hoped there would be no constant changes in the leadership of the DENR, which has seen four secretaries in five years.

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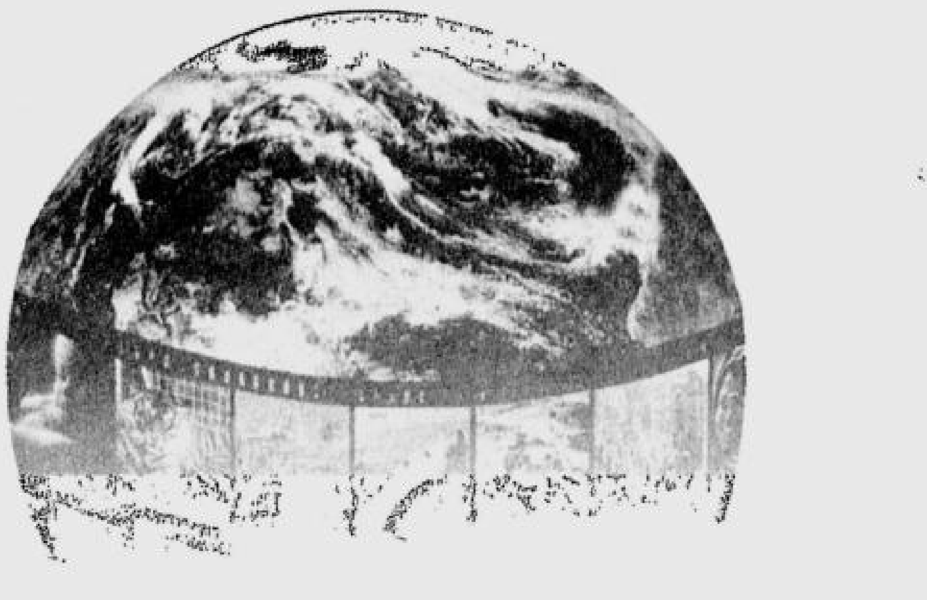


FREE SCREENING ON:
April 1, 8 , 22 & 29
(Saturday) 3pm

Robinsons Place Imus
Robinsons Town Mall Los Baños
Robinsons Place Angeles

April 8, 22 , 29 & May 6
(Saturday) 3pm

Robinsons Place Dasmariñas
Robinsons Place Novaliches

Wanted: More judges in South

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Supreme Court Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez said more judges were needed in Mindanao, particularly in areas tagged as conflict-affected.

"We lack judges and the reason is, we lack applicants," Gutierrez said Saturday.

She said security could be one reason only a few had applied for vacant courts in Mindanao. She did not elaborate.

"At least three names should be submitted by the Judicial and Bar Council to the Office of the President, but the fact is, there's no sufficient number of applicants," Gutierrez said.

"If there is only one applicant, it cannot be submitted to Malacañang."

Each of the 10 judges here handles hundreds of cases per day, said Judge Peter Eisma, of the Regional Trial Court Branch 15.

Most of the judges also sit in municipal trial courts in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi and in other areas of the region.

"We are not yet considering the load of cases in the municipal level," he said.

"The judges go there once a month," Eisma said.

Ricardo Cabaron, Western Mindanao state prosecutor, said the lack of personnel had hounded government prosecution offices.

In the region alone, at least five more prosecutors are needed, he said, but the problem was not about lack of applicants but the process involving appointments. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Mindanao program launched

COTABATO CITY—The World Bank launched the Mindanao Trust Fund for Reconstruction and Development Program (MTF-RDP) here on Monday. Joachim Von Amsberg, World Bank Philippines director, led the launching of the program, which aims to promote effective governance processes and help in the recovery of areas devastated by war on the island. Menchie Celestial, of the World Bank Philippines, said the program hopes to contribute to peace and development in Mindanao.

Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

2 nabbed for murder

AURORA, Isabela—Police last week arrested two suspects in the murder of seven family members here. Town police chief Supt. Baltazar Israel said Edithor and Charita Ubarre had admitted to helping the prime suspect, Ramelito Ybañez, kill members of the Romero family on March 18. The Ubarres, who were arrested on March 23 in Angeles City, worked as helpers of rice trader Victorio Romero, 63, and his wife, Victoria, 60. The Romero couple, their two daughters and three grandchildren were found dead in their house in Barangay Bagong Tanza on March 20.

Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Provisional release bill

MAGANDANG BALITA PO 'YAN !

SORSOGON CITY—A bill is pending in the House of Representatives granting provisional liberty to poor persons accused of non-heinous crimes, without posting bail. Sorsogon Rep. Jose Solis, author of House Bill 4346, said the measure would prevent poor offenders from languishing in jail because they can't afford bail. Solis said many detainees charged with petty crimes languish in jail for years just because they can't pay bail.

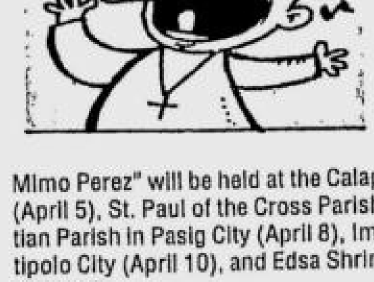
Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Makiling recycling zone

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—A partnership between the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and this municipality has been cited for converting an open garbage dump in the Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve into an ecological processing zone. "The former dump is now a zone for recycling activities where an equipment converts garbage into livelihood products useful for households," said Dr. Portia Lapitan, director of the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME). During a meeting here, mayors in the province expressed support for the declaration of the 4,224-hectare forest reserve as a biodiversity area and watershed that would be maintained by the university.

Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Musical recollections



INSTEAD OF THE USUAL Lenten talk and recollection, Fr. Jeronimo "Mimo" Perez will sing his compositions to deliver a message of renewal and repentance. Perez's musical recollections in several parishes in Vancouver were received well last year, according to a news release. The "Yakap ng Ama, an Evening of Lenten Reflections and Acoustic Gospel Music with Fr. Mimo Perez" will be held at the Calapan Cathedral in Oriental Mindoro (April 5), St. Paul of the Cross Parish in Marikina City (April 7), San Sebastian Parish in Pasig City (April 8), Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Antipolo City (April 10), and Edsa Shrine (April 12). For details, call 0919-5850575.

New commanding officer

CITY OF CALAPAN—Col. Rey Ramones has replaced Col. Raph Villanueva as commanding officer of the 204th Infantry Brigade. Ramones was the deputy commander of the Scout Ranger Regiment in Tarlac. He said he would continue the community-based programs of the brigade and further strengthen partnership with the local government. Villanueva is now the Philippine Military Academy's commandant of cadets. Local leaders and civic groups here appreciated Villanueva's approach of fostering civilian-military partnership in community development efforts.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER *Northern Luzon*

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Rolando B. Fernandez**

THE Pampanga High School building in the City of San Fernando in Pampanga is one of the many Gabaldon buildings all over the country that are now undergoing restoration to preserve their original, functional designs.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELVIN PATAWARAN

The 'Parthenon' gets a facelift

By Tonette Orejas
City of San Fernando, Pampanga

THESE BUILDINGS ARE called the Gabaldon. Three, perhaps more, generations of Filipinos learned the Three Rs (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic) in what are now regarded as the "Parthenon" of the golden years of Philippine public education system.

The structures count by the thousands and are spread out all over the archipelago, with some towns or cities having two or more.

Almost a century since Assemblyman Isauro Gabaldon of Nueva Ecija in 1907 authored Act 1801 that set aside P1 million for their construction, the buildings—many of them run down by time, the elements, looting and neglect—are enjoying a restoration boom with a strong thrust for conserving the original, functional design.

Yale graduate William Parsons, the consulting architect of the Bureau of Public Works from 1905 to 1914, designed the school buildings that were later named after Assemblyman Gabaldon.

The Department of Education and the Heritage Conservation Society (HCS) are leading efforts through the heritage school building restoration program.

"Pioneering" is how architect Augusto Villalon of the HCS calls the partnership.

The idea, Villalon said in a recent column in the INQUIRER, came from former Education Secretary Armand Fabella, and was pushed by his successors, the late Br. Andrew Gonzalez FSC and Edilberto de Jesus, as well as Undersecretary Juan Miguel Luz.

The program has completed the restoration of the Rizal Elementary School in Bacolod City, the Pampanga High School in the City of San Fernando in Pampanga, and the Baguio Central School in Baguio City, according to HCS member Ivan Anthony Henares.

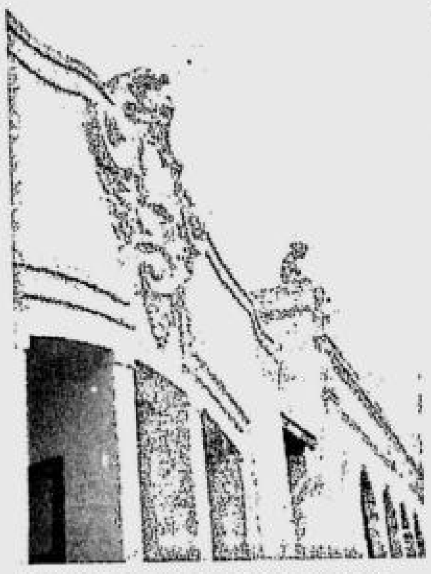
Up for restoration are the West Central Elementary School and its adjacent home economics building in Dagupan City, said Henares, who has created a web log or blog (gabaldon.blogspot.com) to link individuals, groups, institutions and donors to the effort.

"The sheer number of Gabaldon schools all over the country and the lack of funds to restore these buildings would not make it possible to include all in the program," he said.

Heritage resources

The buildings are "an inherent part of our country's heritage resources," he said.

Local initiatives in the restoration effort of Gabaldon buildings have started.



A FAÇADE of Romanesque Doric-like pillars like the Parthenon.

> 'It's a mere one-story affair, but I looked at it with awe. Its ceiling is high … I thought giants walked through its corridors'

In Naga City, for example, Councilor Lourdes Asence has authored a proposed ordinance that seeks to create a task force for the preservation and restoration of all historical structures, including six Gabaldon buildings in that city and in Camarines Sur.

In Bohol, the provincial government spent P2.5 million in 2004 to repair some of its Gabaldon buildings.

In their respective websites, historians in Infanta, Quezon, and in Leganes, Iloilo, have cited the history of their towns' Gabaldon buildings and their impact on the people's education.

Party-list Rep. Florencio Noel (An Waray) has filed House Bill No. 4392 proposing the rehabilitation and repair of Gabaldon school houses nationwide to "preserve their historical significance and to address the need for more school buildings."

History

Some have indeed etched their place in history.

For instance, the Gabaldon building in Dagupan became a temporary residence of American Gen. Douglas MacArthur during World War II, according to Carmen Prieto, chair of the city's heritage commission.

Others served as hospitals, town halls or evacuation centers in times of war and calamities.

More importantly, it was in the rooms, libraries and wide grounds of the Gabaldon buildings that American and Filipino educators helped unlock the potentials of students, many of them poor.

The Pampanga High School, for one, nurtured many of the country's leaders like the late President Diosdado Macapagal (Class 1929).

But perhaps one of the most poignant memories of the Gabaldon and a vivid description of the edifice comes from one who passed through its halls.

Former Quezon Board Member Frumencio "Sonny" Pulgar, in his website, said that as a student, he was a habitué of the "Gusaling Gabaldon" or "Bagong Iskul," the elementary school in his hometown of Calauag.

"For me, Gabaldon was the biggest edifice I had ever seen and played on," he said.

"True, it is not a multistory structure; in fact, it's a mere one-story affair, but I looked at it with awe. Its ceiling was high, about five meters. I thought giants walked through the corridors of Gabaldon. It had a long five-tread flight of stairs leading to its elevated portico, which we used as stage on special occasions," he said.

The Gabaldon's center rooms were divided by a collapsible wood partition that could be folded and converted into a pavilion, he said.

"Gabaldon's windows were huge … The windows were sashed and made of latticed *capiz-tagkawayan*. Its façade had those Romanesque Doric-like pillars I'd seen only in pictures like the Parthenon," Pulgar said.

"Its rooms were big and wide, with *lauan* floors. Its doors were imposing and made from thick and heavy narra. It had a cavernous *silong* (basement)—home of the *kabag* (bats), *ahas tulog* (snakes), *alupihan* (centipede) and giant rats. Though it stunk in there, we used it as hiding place whenever we were late in flag rites," he said.

The Gabaldon buildings are "attuned to the tropics," Villalon noted.

Breezy and cool

"The building is breezy and cool. Being inside the restored building today proves that old-style tropical architecture is still the best for our climate," he said.

There's a practical sense to ongoing, albeit slow, efforts.

"Instead of being rendered obsolete, old structures can still be recycled for modern academic uses," Villalon said.

"By restoring classrooms, the DepEd drives home the lesson that patrimony lives and continues to be relevant to our lives. Classes in heritage classrooms provide experiential learning on patrimony with a stronger impact than textbook instruction," he said.

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
Mandaluyong City

SEC CIRCULAR NO. 5
Series of 2006

TO : ALL DOMESTIC STOCK CORPORATIONS
SUBJECT : SUBMISSION OF GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

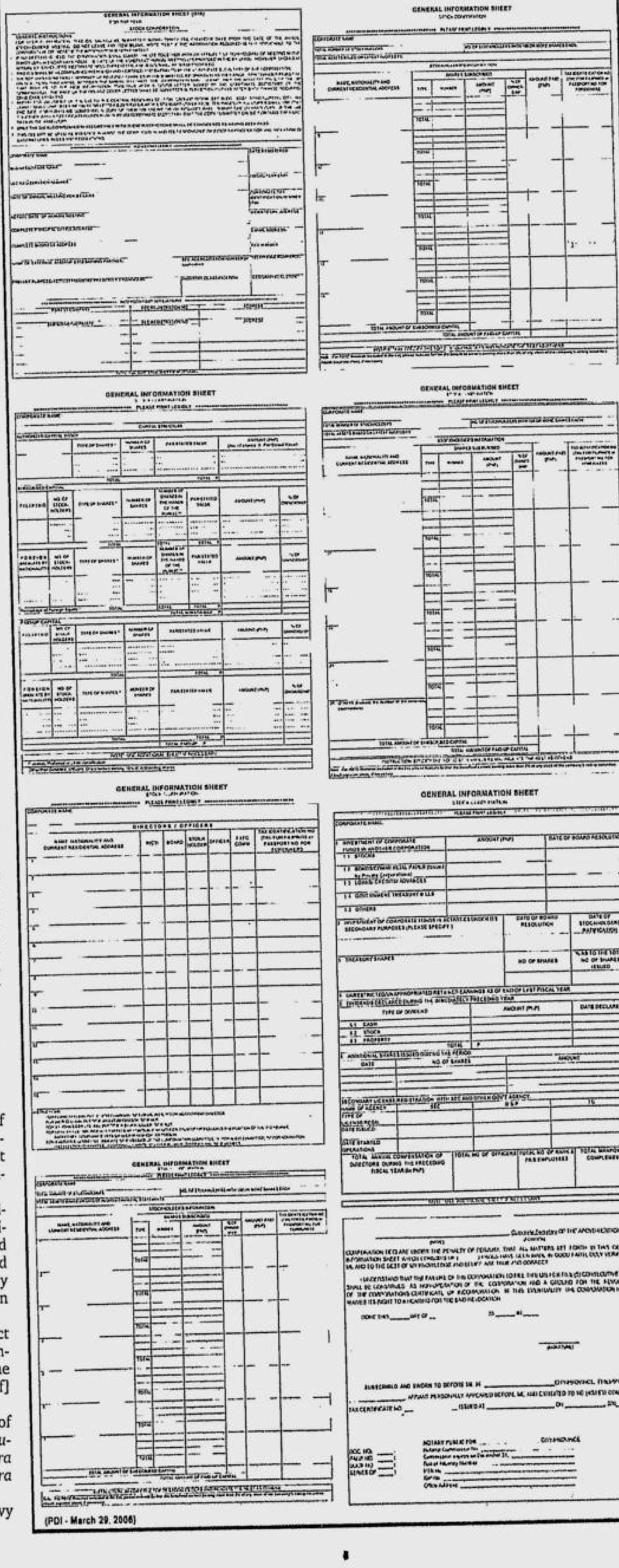
The records of the Commission show that some stock corporations submit General Information Sheets (GIS) that are different from GIS_STOCK (v.2005) form, a copy of which is attached.

The official GIS form is available for downloading at the SEC website (sec.gov.ph) or from any of the Commission's offices.

Starting April 1, 2006, only filings that conform to the format of the official GIS form shall be accepted by the Commission. Filings that deviate from this form shall be considered as non-compliant with existing rules and regulation.

Mandaluyong City, Philippines.
March 23, 2006.

Fe B. Barin
FE B. BARIN
Chairperson



GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

(PDI - March 29, 2006)

Dasol mangroves breathe life anew

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Dasol, Pangasinan

WHEN THE FIRST seedling was planted to reforest a decimated mangrove forest in the bosom of the Dasol Bay in Pangasinan last week, residents heaved a collective sigh of relief.

"We have not given up on our dream that the mangrove forest will still return to its original state. This is the answer to our prayers," Rafael Baraan said.

It was Baraan and the late Ramon Liceralde who waged a campaign to stop the gradual clearing of the virgin mangrove forest—a rich source of fish, crustaceans and fingerlings for residents—starting in 1988. The trees were cut when local officials decided to convert the area into fishponds.

Baraan and Liceralde then sought the residents' signatures for a petition asking local officials to stop the destruction of the mangrove forest. They went to government agencies in the town, but they were met with indifference.

Soon, century-old mangroves in more than 100 hectares of land were felled.

Before he died in 1995, Liceralde asked his fellow residents to exert efforts to bring the mangrove area back to its original state.

He got his wish, 18 years after the first tree was cut. On March 21, people of Barangays Amalbalan and Gaisguipe planted seedlings that would replace the mangroves cut in 1988.

Joint undertaking

It was the start of the Multi-Partnership Mangrove Rehabilitation of Dasol Bay, a joint undertaking of the municipal government, Tanggol Kalikasan and the Foundation of the Philippine Environment (FPE).

Ava Sharon Batay-an, director of the Tanggol Kalikasan-Northern Luzon, said the FPE funded the project with a counterpart amount from Altria Funds, an international agency.

"The project complements the initiative of the town in saving the estimated 60 hectares of mangroves and restoring 50 hectares of degraded mangrove areas along the bay through rehabilitation," Batay-an said.

This year, she said, the project aimed to reforest 10 hectares of mangrove area. "We hope to expand the project to Infanta and [other parts of] Dasol [in] the coming years."

Planted were the species of *bakauan babae* (*Rhizophora mucronat*), *bakauan lalaki* (*Rhizophora apiculat*), *bakauan bato* (*Rhizophora stylosa*), *sonneratia* and *avicennia*.

These species can withstand heavy rains and big waves, Batay-an said.

House opposition names 50 lawmakers vs Cha-cha

By Norman Bordadora

CHALLENGED TO SHOW THAT IT HAD the numbers necessary to kill Charter change, the House minority yesterday disclosed the names of the 50 lawmakers who had signified their intent to do so.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero of Sorsogon told reporters that their 36-member bloc would file today the resolution opposing the convening of Congress into a constituent assembly (con-ass) via a three-fourths vote of all members of the two chambers voting together, as proposed by Speaker Jose de Venecia himself.

"Since [the majority] expressed doubt that we have the 50 signatures, we want them to know that we do have the 50. We may even surpass that number with two more congressmen waiting to sign," Escudero said at a news conference.

On Escudero's list were 16 majority congressmen, including Deputy Majority Leader Crispin Remulla of Cavite.

One minority member, Negros Occidental Rep. Jacinto Paras, did not sign. Another, Zamboanga City Rep. Erico Fabian, said he would sign but had yet to do so as of yesterday afternoon.

Signatories

Those who signed the minority resolution were Escudero, Darlene Antonino-Custodio, Teofisto Guingona III, Joel Villanueva, Crispin Beltran, Agapito Aquino, Beizendig Dilangalen, Emilio Abaya, Alfonso Umali;

Teodoro Casiño, Satur Ocampo, Ruy Elias Lopez, Luis Asistio, Ronaldo Zamora, Joel Virador, Dina Abad, Vincent Crisologo, Mujiv Hataman, Mario Aguja, Risa Baraquel, Benigno Aquino III, Roilo Golez, Gilbert Remulla;

Ruffino Biazon, Oscar Malapitan, Liza Maza, Renato Magtubo, Rodolfo Plaza, Alan Peter Cayetano, Benjamin Agarao, Justin Chipeco, Lorenzo Tañada III, Herilando Mandanas, Nereus Acosta, Imee Marcos;

Florencio Noel, Rolex Suplico, Antonio Serapio, Robert Jaworski Jr., Crispin Remulla, Joseph Santiago, Jack Enrile, Loretta Ann Rosales, Clavel Martinez, Juan Edgardo Angara, Manuel Mamba, Rodolfo Bacani, Proceso Alcala, Cynthia Villar and Rafael Mariano.

De Venecia, however, remained confident the Cha-cha train he had started would continue to roll despite the 50 signatures presented by Escudero.

"Eleven of that number are withdrawing. And from our 180 (for Cha-cha), three are withdrawing," De Venecia said.

He expressed confidence that Cha-cha adherents in Congress in the end will have their way.

ADEL LAZARO
EFREN DE LUNA

A COALITION of over 100 people's organizations and other sectoral groups had solicited over 4.5-million signatures, according to lawyer Raul Lambino (center), to push for a people's initiative for Charter change. REM ZAMORA

The 3-percent rule: JDV declares victory

By Michael Lim Ubac

A SINGLE LEGISLATIVE DIStrict failing to gather the required 3 percent of its registered voters to support a people's initiative to revise the Charter will "nullify the entire process," Speaker Jose de Venecia said late yesterday.

But even before the signatures backing Charter change could be validated, the Speaker declared victory, saying "almost all districts have exceeded the 3-percent constitutional requirement for a people's initiative."

At a press conference, De Venecia said the House had received "overwhelming support" for the administration-backed signature campaign.

"They're reporting an average of 15-25 percent [of the signatures in most districts]; some are higher. So by the time the reports are completed, we will be way, way, way in excess of the minimum constitutional requirement of 12 percent of the national average," he said.

He claimed that no district had reported "results of less than 3 percent."

De Venecia said the House majority had to support the signature campaign amid the Senate's adamant stand against Charter change.

"We would prefer the constituent assembly route but, unfortunately, senators have said they [would] knock it down by insisting that the voting should be done separately," said De Venecia.

He said the Constitution was "clear" in saying that revising the fundamental law entailed three-fourths of "all the members of Congress."

De Venecia said the failure of both chambers to see eye to eye on the mode of revising the Charter had forced the people to take "direct action."

"This is now what Filipinos themselves are doing—by direct action of the people—because of the gridlock and the constant tension and crises that had even led to destabilization and impeachment and coup attempts and Edsa I, II, II, IV and V," he said.

Comelec split on Charter change

From page A1

voters, of which every legislative district must be represented by at least 3 percent of the registered voters therein."

He said there was no need for anyone to bribe local election officials to verify the signatures.

He challenged those claiming that they had been bribed or forced to verify the signatures to file a case in court.

Abalos said the Comelec's law department officials and regional directors reached the agreement on verification at a meeting the other day.

"It was settled that the signature drive and verification were not part of the petition proper but part of the initiatory steps leading to it. What we will be doing is help ensure that the process is correct," he said.

Abalos also said the Comelec's actions would "speed up the work," if the petition were entertained.

Asked if a budget had been provided for the activity, he said the verification of signatures was part of the Comelec's administrative function.

"We do signature verification for recall elections as well. This is a similar situation," he said.

No recourse but dismissal

According to Brawner, the Comelec, if asked to rule on a petition for amending the Constitution through a people's initiative, would always be "guided" by the March 1997 ruling of the Supreme Court.

"The case says that the Comelec is prohibited from giving cognizance [to] or entertaining cases," he said in reply to a question by House Majority Leader Prospero Pichay at the CA hearing at the Senate.

"If a petition of this sort reaches the Comelec, we have no choice but to comply with the jurisprudence," he said. "As soon as a petition is filed, we have no recourse but to dismiss the petition."

Thus, he added, anybody who would be "adversely affected" by a future Comelec resolution of this nature "would have to go to the Supreme Court."

Brawner, 70, whose appointment was recommended to the plenary, backed Senate President Franklin Drilon's earlier aired view that any petition of this nature should be dismissed outright by the Comelec in the absence of an enabling law.

"For the Comelec to rule on a petition would be a grave abuse of discretion," Drilon had said in an interview.

Abalos declared on Monday that his office was ready to begin verifying the millions of signatures that people's initiative advocates had collected.

4.5M signatures

In a statement, Sigaw ng Bayan, which described itself as "a loose but broad coalition of over 100 people's organizations, nongovernment organizations and other sectoral groups" yesterday said that as of Monday, local groups had gathered over 4.5 million signatures to push a people's initiative, "with millions more expected in the days ahead."

When pressed by Pichay for his personal view on the lack of an enabling law, Brawner said: "I beg not to say anything on that because a case might be filed in court or even the Comelec. That [is] the issue that will be raised.

"We have to really follow the dictates of the jurisprudence."

Brawner also said the Comelec had "no personality" to elevate any petition to the high court. He said that the poll body would "only act" on any petition presented before it, and that "it's up to anybody adversely affected to go to the Supreme Court."

He voiced the hope that the high court would eventually resolve the issue "once and for all," and noted the close vote of justices that led to the March 1997 ruling on the people's initiative.

Information drive

Reacting to reports that money was being offered in exchange for signatures, particularly in the provinces, Vice President Noli de Castro said the proponents of the people's initiative should conduct an information campaign on the proposed amendments so the people would fully understand the issues.

"The right of the people to undertake initiatives to propose specific amendments to the Constitution is guaranteed in the Constitution itself, subject to the provisions of the enabling law," De Castro said, adding:

"We should not waste our opportunity to amend and revise our Constitution. And for a comprehensive review and revision of our Charter, there is a need for greater information and discussion in the grass-roots level, especially on the issues of the proposed shift from the presidential to parliamentary form of government, and the accompanying transitory provisions."

De Castro said the country would move forward if the people were properly informed and enlightened on the issues involved in decision-making.

Alternative centers

The militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and allied groups called on the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to open parish doors for the education of the public on the government's supposed motives in amending the Charter.

"Make them alternative centers where people can really know what is behind the Cha-cha moves of the administration. These centers can also gather signatures and amplify the people's opposition," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes.

According to Reyes, the CBCP's moral influence is very much needed because President Macapagal-Arroyo is "hell-bent on pushing Charter change despite serious legal and moral questions."

"The administration is trying to co-opt the barangays. Hopefully they will not be able to co-opt the parishes," Reyes said.

A number of Catholic bishops had earlier expressed reservations about Charter change.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales had said that the problem lay more in the character of the people serving in the government, not in the Constitution itself.

"The CBCP has been consistent in its position. We hope that it could link up with people's organizations, especially in the communities, for this common effort of frustrating Ms Arroyo's Charter change drive," Reyes said.

Bayan is involved in the People's Movement Against Arroyo's Charter Change (People's March), a multisectoral group composed of lawyers, members of the academe, environmentalists, Church people and other sectors.

Let process take its course

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye urged politicians opposed to the signature drive to allow the "democratic process" to take its course.

"Instead of continuing the destructive politicking on the issue of the people's initiative, we suggest that our politicians let the process roll on to its natural course and let the people decide if indeed there is popular support for substantive changes in our Constitution," Bunye told reporters.

"The more they try to demean this effort of the people, [the more they] show their insecurity," he said.

Bunye said Malacañang had allowed the drive to "run its course without interference."

He expressed the Palace's elation over people "responding to the call for transformation and change."

Michael Defensor, Ms Arroyo's chief of staff, said the people's "hearts and minds" were now open to joining the Charter change discussions instead of leaving the matter to the politicians.

"In the past months, we have seen a coup plot and destabilization efforts, and I think many people are convinced that in order to have stability and respond to many of our problems today, we have to [institutionalize] the reforms needed," he said.

Defensor called on those critical of Charter change to take part in the debate and in instituting political reforms.

"By continuing to limit themselves to politicking and trying to muddle the issue of Charter change, this also becomes a disservice to the people," he told reporters in a briefing.

'Insult'

Both Defensor and Bunye denied the opposition's claim that fraud and manipulation had marked the signature drive.

Defensor said it was an "insult" to the residents of his district in Quezon City for one to say that they took part in the signature drive without understanding Charter change.

Bunye said such accusations were "unfounded and farfetched."

And while the Palace reiterated that it had no direct involvement in the signature drive, it reiterated Ms Arroyo's full support for Charter change.

"What we can say is right from the start, the President [has been] straightforward and very open ... that she is in favor of changing the Constitution. And during her State of the Nation address [last year], she even specified the preferred manner of changing the Constitution [and that is through a constituent assembly]," Bunye said. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Christian V. Esguerra and Christine O. Avendano*

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Separate findings, no closure

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES inquiry has resulted in two "Hello Garci" reports, separate findings, no closure.

At dusk yesterday, the majority and minority blocs came up with separate committee reports on the wiretapping scandal that nearly unseated President Macapagal-Arroyo last year.

It was the majority bloc represented by chairs of the five House committees that first handed its report to Speaker Jose de Venecia.

De Venecia congratulated the chairs led by Rep. Emmylou Talino-Santos for "their wisdom and dedication to duty."

The minority report penned by Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla highlighted the futility of the search for truth behind an opposition allegation that the recordings showed that Ms Arroyo phoned Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to boost her chances of winning the 2004 presidential race.

"It's likewise undeniable that the Arroyo government, in general, has shown utter disregard, if not disrespect, towards the inquiry. Though members of the administration appeared during the public hearings, nothing substantial was presented to help ferret out the truth," said the minority report.

Lost opportunity

The report said that the 14 public hearings could have "finally be the moment for Congress to address the lingering problem of election cheating, but with the way the witnesses conducted themselves, the opportunity was lost."

The minority report would be "appended" to the main report, said Santos.

As expected, there was nothing new in the majority's findings and recommendations.

The main report did not deviate from the revised draft report it routed to committee members on March 13, which admitted the failure of the joint congressional inquiry to unravel the mystery of the political controversy.

The report said that the hearings "only raised more issues and answered none," thus Congress should "continue to seek the answers ... and in particular subpoena phone records to establish the likelihood or unlikelihood that alleged wiretapping conversations could have taken place."

Cite in contempt

In plenary session, Remulla asked that Garcillano, along with his lawyer, Eddie Tamondong, be cited in contempt for claiming he did not leave the country on July 14, 2005, contrary to a note verbale issued by the Singaporean Embassy.

Remulla also cited a certification issued by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas last March 20 that one of the two passports Garcillano submitted to the joint committee was defective.

Upon Remulla's persistent request, the joint committee asked BSP, which prints all blank passports for the Department of Foreign Affairs, to examine the passports last February.

The certification showed that Garcillano's second passport (No. JJ243816) issued to him in 2002 did not conform to standard on six counts. However, the previous passport (No. BB602533), which he also submitted to the joint inquiry, "conforms to standard."

House insulted

Remulla said the House leadership should take a "strong action" against Garcillano and Tamondong who, he said, went on television accusing the joint committee of tampering with the passport.

"What should we do? (They) insulted us outright. Is this how we defend the institutional pride and dignity of the chamber?" asked Remulla.

He said the two caused him "personal injury."

The majority, however, prevailed upon Remulla to withhold temporarily the motion seeking to cite the two in contempt pending action of the plenary on the two committee reports.

BSP did not say passport fake

Rep. Prospero Pichay said the BSP findings did not say the passport was fake.

"It did not say that. It only said some of the features did not conform to standard. The BSP is not the authority when it comes to ascertaining authenticity of passports," said Pichay.

The inquiry was mounted following the release in June last year of wiretapped phone conversations purportedly between President Arroyo and Garcillano.

The opposition said the recordings were evidence that Ms Arroyo cheated in the May 2004 elections. The President has denied the allegations and in September last year, her dominant allies in the House killed an impeachment attempt against her that stemmed from disclosures in the wiretaps.

Last November, the House probers released a draft report on their hearings accusing Malacañang of cover-up. Ms. Arroyo's allies blocked the report and instead demanded that the episode highlighted an opposition attempt to unseat the 58-year-old President.

Abu Sayyaf blamed for deadly Jolo bombing

From page A1

office released yesterday a list of the nine fatalities, including a 2-year-old girl. Twenty others were wounded in the attack—the second in Jolo this year. A man was killed in a blast at a videoke bar last month. *(See list of fatalities below.)*

Senior Supt. Ahirum Ajirim, provincial police director, described the blast as being "very powerful" that it tore away half of the store building.

Device used by Abu

He said investigation showed the blast was caused by a homemade bomb packed with ammonium nitrate and detonated by a cell phone hooked to a timer. It was probably hidden in the baggage counter, he said. This type of explosive had been used before by the Abu Sayyaf, he said.

There was also a letter sent to the store, run by Catholic Marists, seeking an unspecified amount of money, said Brig. Gen. Alexander Aleo, commander of the military-led antiterrorism Task Force Comet. It was signed Abu Abdul Gawi, the nom de guerre of Ismin Sahiron, son of Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan Sahiron.

Warning

The letter, which was left at a nearby pharmacy, told the store management of the impending attack that would serve as a warning to those who ignored the group's demands. Two mobile phone numbers were provided.

"There was no particular amount, but they were demanding something and it stated there that the Abu Sayyaf was willing to negotiate," Aleo said.

The device and the letter showed that the bombing was masterminded by the Abu Sayyaf, said Aleo.

Marines cause tension

Ajirim said a man earlier reported as having been detained following the blast was identified as a Marine and was released after police found no evidence to link him to the incident.

The INQUIRER learned that prior to the release of the Marine, a near shoot-out between his unit and the local police occurred.

The tension started when Marines, on two 6 x 6 trucks and an armored personnel carrier, went to the Jolo police station and at gunpoint demanded their colleague's release. Tension was defused and the Marine was freed, according to Mayor Alkramer Izquierdo.

Like savages

Izquierdo said he was unhappy with the incident. "If the suspect is a member of the military, then shall we let him go free? It should be a big no, there should be due process," Izquierdo said.

"It was an insult to us and to the entire police organization because they did not respect the rule of law for acting like savages at the height of our sorrow," he said.

But Col. Juancho Sabban, commander of the 3rd Marine Brigade, said the arrest of the Marine was uncalled for. "My operative was there at the scene to get pictures and information on the blast. Yes, he was bringing a VHF radio that was supposed to be for repair. Did the police know that the triggering device was a cell phone and not a dead VHF radio?" Sabban said.

Ajirim said the Marine was invited for questioning only because he did not have an identification card when he was accosted for carrying a handgun.

Fatalities

Killed on Monday were Nasser Hadjirul of Barangay Martirez; Jesus Cabrera of Barangay Kasalamatan; Titing Nasesa and Marivic Manuel, 40, of Habena village; Masser Saibuddin, head teacher of Tongkil Elementary School in Tongkil town; Mocarsa Abduharim, 18, of Camp Andres, Luuk town; Babygirl Sahipa, 2, of Indanan; Al Kissae of Pangutaran, and a woman who was burned beyond recognition. *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Michael Lim Ubac, Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Luige A. del Puerto*

Court temporarily stops DOJ inquiry into Ultra …

From page A1

danes, Francisco Rivera, Mel Feliciano and Jean Owen Ercia.

ABS-CBN strategy

NBI officials yesterday said the resort to a restraining order was part of an ABS-CBN strategy "to bide time" while negotiating an amicable settlement. A successful negotiation on the network's civil liabilities could lead to the dropping of the criminal complaint, they said.

NBI executive officers for the National Capital Region Rosauro Bautista and Ferdinand Lavin said the issuance of the TRO was a "welcome development."

"The TRO would give us extra time to go over the legal grounds set by the petitioner," Lavin said.

Lasala, however, stressed that strong evidence against the accused remained to be the "bottom line."

"We strongly believe that the evidence we presented is sufficient to warrant the indictment of the accused in court," Lasala said. "We also have to consider the victims pursuing their cases, who opted not to submit affidavits of desistance so far."

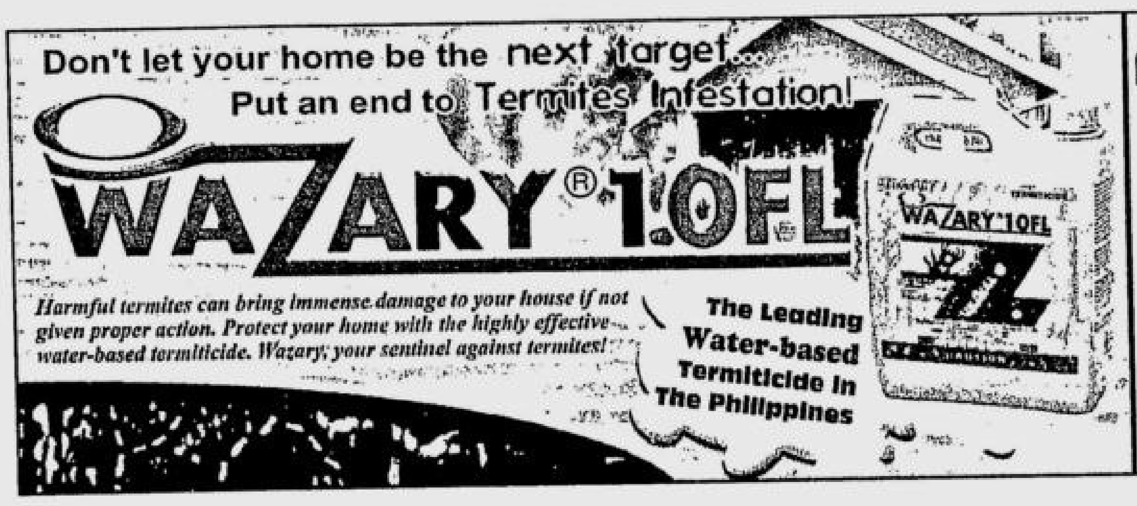
Some victims angry

VACC founding chair Dante Jimenez said many of the victims were angered by the issuance of the TRO.

"The relatives of the dead victims feel that there is a very dim prospect of achieving justice because of the delay," Jimenez told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He, however, said that the victims were open to an amicable settlement with ABS-CBN "as long as the network is sincere."

"The victims also want Wowowee to either stop airing or undergo restructuring with the replacement of (Willie) Revillame as host," Jimenez said.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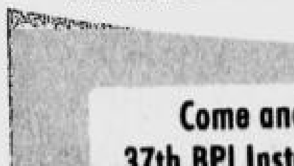

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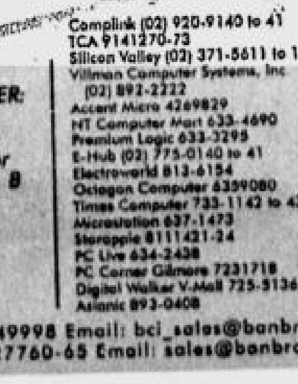

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ESTRADA sworn in as defense witness during his trip to the witness stand.

AP

Erap returns to stand today, nixes clemency

By Nelson F. Flores

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH ESTRADA IS EXPECTED TO REbut charges he received protection money from *jueteng* lords when he takes the witness stand again today at the resumption of his five-year-old plunder trial, one of his lawyers said yesterday.

Former Manila City Prosecutor Jose Flaminiano said Estrada would prove that he did not receive any bribe money from *jueteng*, an illegal numbers game, as alleged by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

In his testimony last week, the 68-year-old Estrada also denied Singson's allegations that the former actor-turned-President had received P130 million in kickbacks from tobacco excise taxes in Ilocos Sur.

Flaminiano, who is conducting Estrada's direct examination, said that aside from rebutting the alleged tax kickbacks and gambling payoffs, Estrada's testimony would also touch on the former President's alleged secret bank account and his alleged attempt to intervene in the stock market to favor a company owned by his friend Dante Tan.

The Estrada camp yesterday also rejected talk of clemency for the toppled leader.

Former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, a spokesman for Estrada, said clemency was not at all being discussed within the former president's circle because they believed he would be acquitted.

Prosecution's case weak

"How can we talk of clemency when we are all one in our assessment that the prosecution's case is inherently weak?" Dilangalen said. "These are trumped-up and politically motivated charges that would not stand up to the court's scrutiny."

Aside from impeaching the testimonies of prosecution witnesses such as Singson on the plunder and perjury charges, Estrada also seeks to prove that he was illegally removed from power through a conspiracy among civil society groups, the Left and the Right, thus depriving him prematurely of immunity from suit.

The former President will also show how he had been offered immunity from suit in exchange for agreeing to go into exile abroad and how he had become a victim of "selective prosecution," Flaminiano added.

Meanwhile, Sandiganbayan Sheriff Ed Urieta said security would remain tight today at the anti-graft court's compound.

He said the court had requested assistance from the Quezon City Police District as Estrada's supporters were expected to stage demonstrations in front of the Sandiganbayan building.

As in last week's hearing, no live radio or television coverage would be allowed from within the courtroom during the hearing, Urieta said. This time, the court will not allow still photographers inside the courtroom, he added.

Photographers not allowed

"We will not allow pictures to be taken inside the courtroom," Urieta said in Filipino. "It's unwieldy. Two people were injured last week because it was unruly."

According to Dilangalen, talk of clemency for the former President was part of the Arroyo administration's diversionary tactics to cover up the weakness of the prosecution's case particularly in light of recent surveys showing Estrada had higher approval ratings than President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Even if you trace all these talks of reconciliation over the past five years, you will see that President Estrada never once entertained any of these offers because he is committed to only one thing: proving his innocence before an honorable court and regaining his honor and freedom through legal processes," Dilangalen said.

Memorandum Circular No. 155 dated Nov. 17, 2004 granting clemency to convicts aged 70 and above on humanitarian grounds would not apply to Estrada's case, Dilangalen added.

"As far as we are concerned, that circular covers only those who have been convicted of a crime and we believe President Estrada will be acquitted because there is absolutely no evidence against him that would warrant his conviction," he said.

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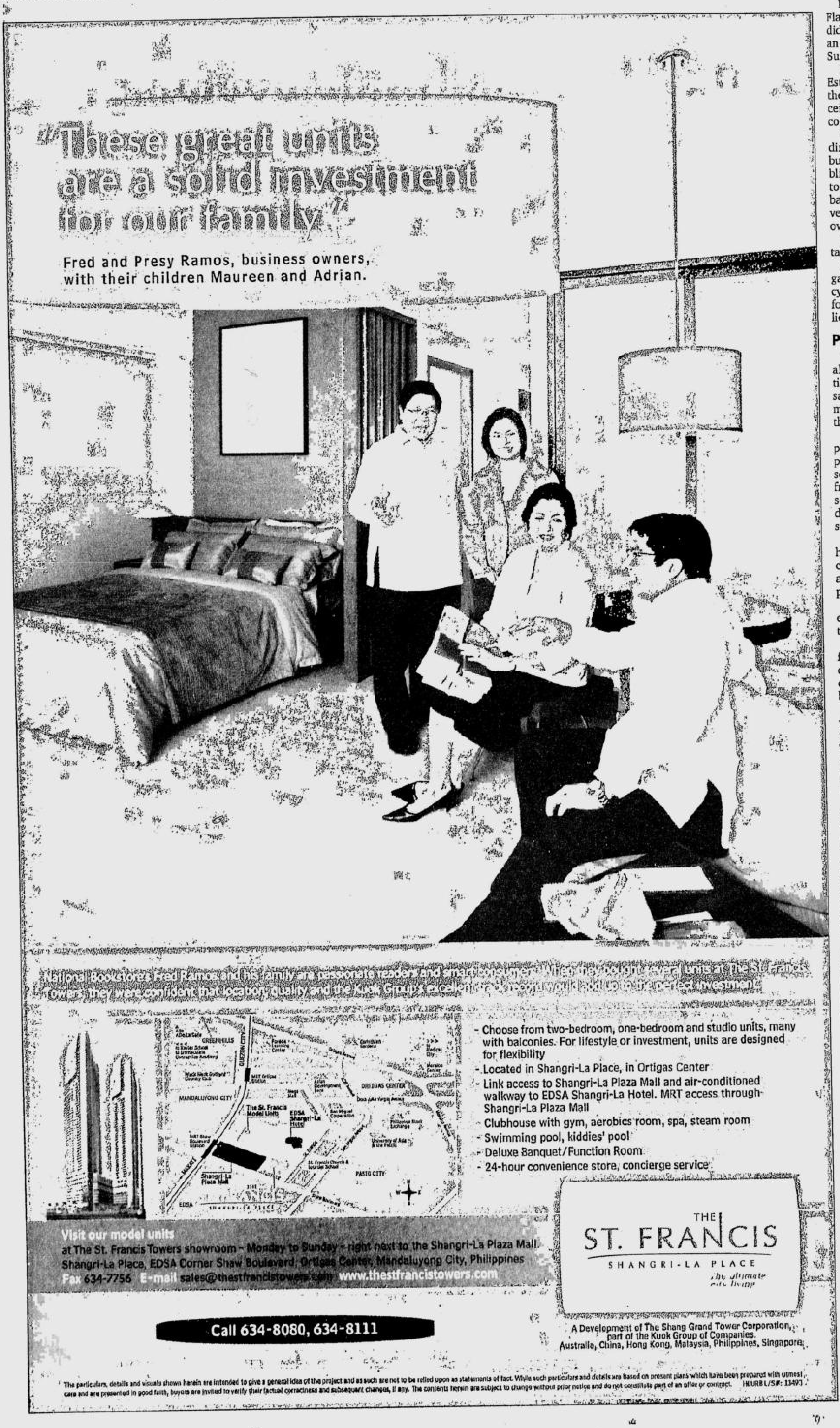

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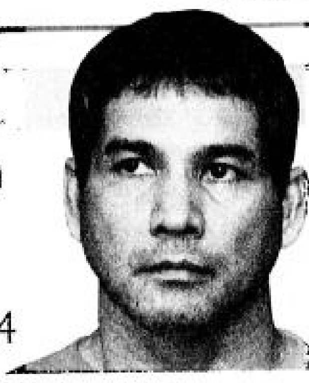

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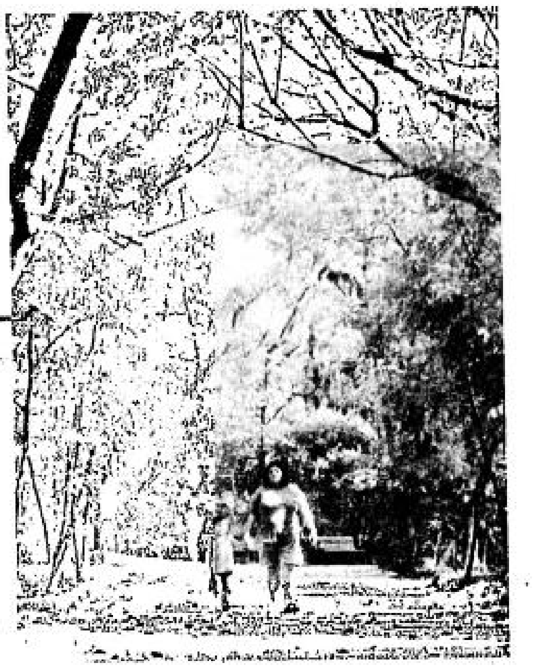


PCSO execs, 11 others in STL charged

By DJ Yap

DAYS AFTER THE RAID ON FOUR SMALL Town Lottery (STL) outlets in Quezon City, the police filed charges against officials of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and Benchmark Acquisition International Corp., the STL franchise holder in the city.

Charged with illegal gambling in the QC Prosecutor's Office on Monday were PCSO assistant general manager for lottery Conrado Zabella, regional manager Adonis Curato, and Benchmark president and general manager Jojie Atienza.

Also charged were Benchmark chief executive officer Alvin Atienza, assistant operations manager Prospero Atienza, and eight other employees.

The Quezon City police District Intelligence and Investigation Division accused the 13 of violating Presidential Decree 1602, or the Anti-Illegal Gambling Act, and city ordinance SP-91, series of 1993, or operating without a business permit.

The STL is a project of the PCSO that is supposed to replace the illegal numbers game "jueteng." According to a Department of Interior and Local Government official, Malacanang has allowed the PCSO to conduct STL test runs for a year.

Mayor's permit

Interior Assistant Secretary Bryan Yamsuan, however, said that if the STL outlets were operating without a mayor's permit, the police could make arrests.

According to the charge sheet signed by Supt. Roger James Brillantes, DIID chief, the 13 engaged in illegal gambling activities when they conducted a test run of the game on March 25.

The police said they had conducted surveillance operations on the STL outlets after Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. ordered all STL operations in the city stopped.

Last Saturday, police raided the STL head office at Unit 109, Prima Building on East Avenue, and three other outlets. They also arrested more than 60 collectors and operators.

The police seized a computer set, three telephones, a steel cabinet with PCSO markings, a set of drawing numbers and other gambling paraphernalia.

Prerogative

Benchmark lawyer Arnold Bayobay said he has not yet received a copy of the charges but added that the company "welcomed" the opportunity to present their side in a regular proceeding. "It's the prerogative of the apprehending officers to file subsequent cases," he said. Earlier, he said Benchmark would stop its operations temporarily until it has the necessary mayor's and business permits.

Meanwhile, Sen. Manuel Villar yesterday said that reviving STL operations would not stop jueteng. Villar, chairman of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs, said in a statement that STL was not the solution to jueteng since it also promotes "the culture of gambling."

STL was first introduced during the Aquino administration but it proved "no match for jueteng's popularity and bigger prize money," he added.

A former big-time jueteng operator, on the other hand, said that STL would end up being run by the same people involved in the illegal numbers game. "The kings of jueteng will also be the kings of STL," Wilfredo "Boy" Mayor told the INQUIRER. *With Philip C. Tubeza and Christian V. Esguerra*

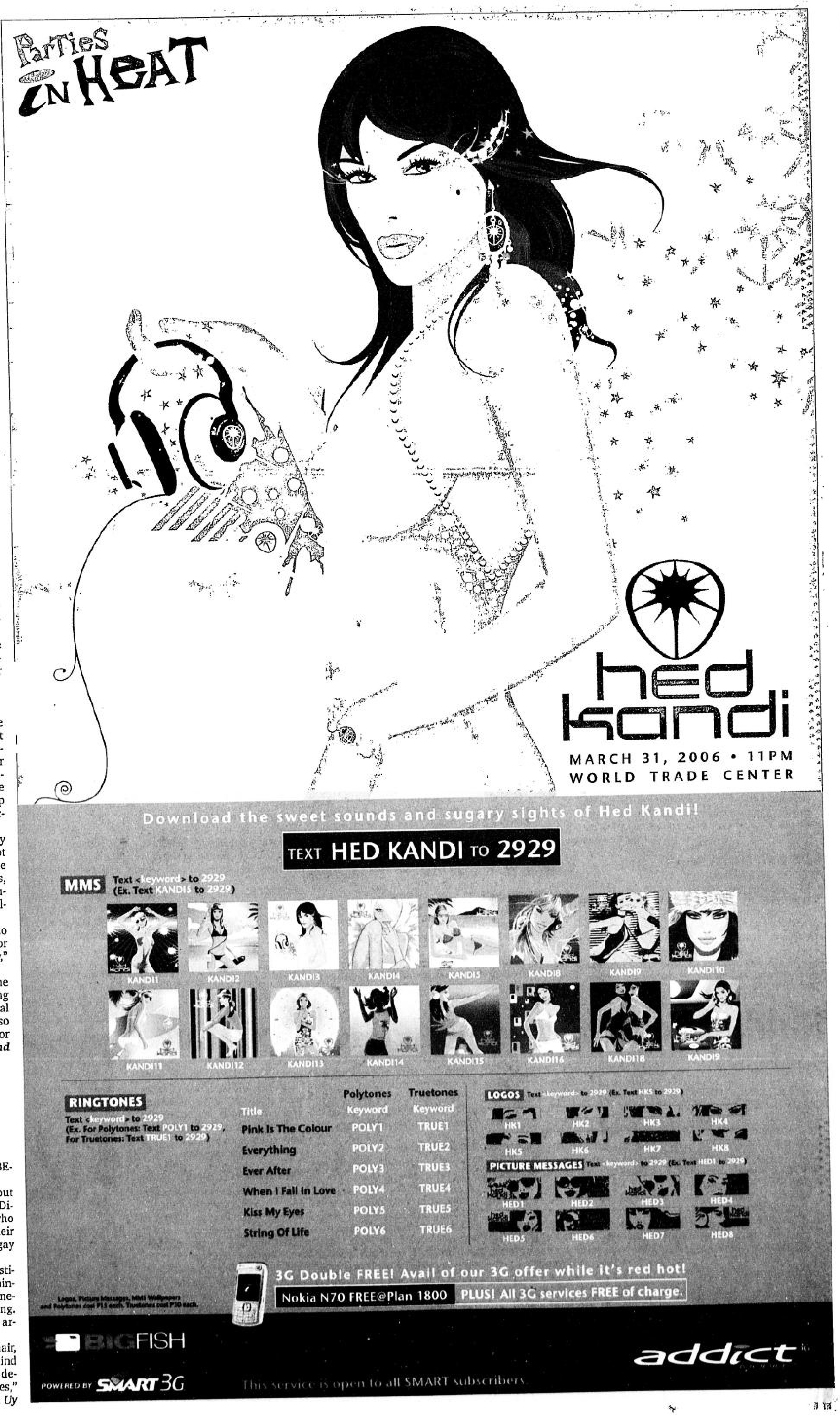
Deadly fight over children

IT STARTED WITH A PETTY FIGHT BEtween two children.

But neighbors were surprised to find out that the fight eventually led to the death of Dimawari Antonio and his partner, Daisy, who were found dead of stab wounds inside their house at Multinational Village, Barangay Moonwalk, Parañaque City.

SP03 Bernardo Mendoza, homicide investigator, said the suspect in the killings , Domingo Dabu, was identified by the couple's nine-year-old daughter who witnessed the killing. Dabu, however, escaped before the police arrived.

Clemente Advincula, the barangay chair, said an old grudge could be the motive behind the killing. "A fight between their children developed into a feud between the two couples," said Advincula. *Jocelyn R. Uy*



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Firm staves off power cutoff via SC appeal

By Abigail L. Ho

A SUPREME COURT RULING may lead to the cutting of power to vital installations in the southern part of Metro Manila, including Makati, the country's financial center.

In a briefing yesterday, National Transmission Corp. (Transco) president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said the company will appeal the recent Supreme Court ruling stopping the firm from energizing and transmitting high-voltage electric current through the Sucat-Araneta-Balintawak transmission lines.

The high tribunal upheld the decision handed down by a Makati Regional Trial Court in 2000 preventing the National Power Corp. from sending power to its cables from Sucat in Parañaque to Araneta Ave. in Quezon City.

The lower court's ruling was based on a petition filed by residents of Dasmariñas Village in Makati which had opposed the transmission line project because of health concerns.

In its decision, the Supreme Court said there was enough evidence that the power lines could be endangering the health and safety of residents in the area where the lines pass through.

Crucial line

"When the Supreme Court denies our appeal and says we have to shut down the line, we will appeal again and again," Ortiz said. The power network was a "crucial" line and could not be turned off just like that, he added.

"The Sucat-Araneta line is the main artery, so this is a crucial line. We cannot just turn it off because this would be a disadvantage to millions of consumers who rely on electricity for their daily livelihood," Ortiz said.

Should the network be shut down, it would affect power supply to vital installations such as the Edsa Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT-3) the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, as well as the Makati Central Business District.

"Hopefully, more enlightened parties would give us more breathing space to maintain the line. Clearly, to cut is not an immediate option, since all communities linked to the line will have no electricity, including the MRT and Naia," he said.

He added that it would take Transco between 12 and 18 months to work on diverting the power from the Sucat-Araneta-Balintawak line.

Since Transco had not yet been created when the Makati RTC issued its decision regarding the Sucat-Araneta-Balintawak line in 2000, Napocor would have to be the one to make an appeal.

In October last year, a power outage lasting close to two hours hit certain areas in the south as well as the province of Laguna when Transco encountered problems in the Sucat-Araneta line.

Brownouts

The affected areas included Makati, Pasay, Taguig, Mandaluyong, Las Piñas, Parañaque and Laguna. The Naia domestic and international terminals as well as the Centennial Terminal and MRT-3 operations all suffered power interruptions.

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY
LOCAL government officials, representatives from Greenpeace, nongovernment organizations and residents of three towns in Quezon severely affected by flash floods in 2004 gathered recently at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani in Quezon Avenue. They lit 1,500 candles laid out on the ground in the shape of a tree in memory of the thousands of victims of disasters caused by illegal logging.
JOSE ENRIQUE SORIANO

Forest by the bay

By Tina G. Santos

PROMENADERS WHO FREQUENT THE CULtural Center of the Philippines (CCP) grounds at the boundary of Pasay and Manila may be glad to know that an urban forest will soon be developed in the area.

Regina Paterno, president of Winner Foundation, said a lightly-wooded area on the CCP grounds along Roxas Boulevard will be transformed into an ecological showcase.

The urban forest, which would be called "Liwasang Kalikasan," will be inaugurated during the Earth Day celebration next month.

"It will also be a venue for cultural and educational activities," Paterno told INQUIRER.

The urban forest is a project of the CCP, Winner and other environmental advocate groups like Haribon Foundation, the Lasallian Institute for the Environment and the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation.

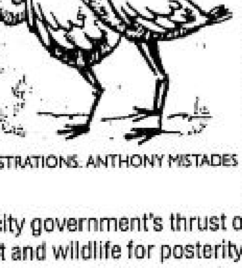
Paterno said they decided to nurture another forest to provide a respite for city dwellers from pressures that make life in the city so stressful.

"We would like to provide a restful area for enjoying nature, one of the few locations in the city where the spirit can be recharged. We feel that each city should have an urban forest to fight off pollution," Paterno added.

Winner Foundation is the caretaker of the Arroceros Forest Park, just beside the Pasig River. The foundation, however, is embroiled in a court case with the Manila City government which is constructing a building for teachers inside the park.

METROBRIEFS

Makati's newest residents



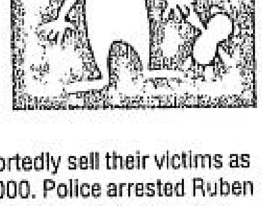
ILLUSTRATIONS. ANTHONY MISTADES

A PAIR of black-crowned night herons would soon be the newest attractions at the Makati Park and Garden in Barangay West Rembo. The city government adopted the herons which were earlier rescued by personnel of the Parks and Wildlife Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "The adoption of the herons underscores the city government's thrust of protecting the environment and wildlife for posterity and enjoyment of the coming generations," Mayor Jejomar Binay said in a statement. Makati Information and Community Relations Department chief Joey Salgado said herons were part of the city's landscape when Makati was still an undeveloped swampland prior to the Spanish colonization in the 16th century. The city recently became a protected area for birds after the city council passed an ordinance that declared Makati a bird sanctuary. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Cop killed on the job

A POLICEMAN was stabbed and shot dead while trying to arrest an armed suspect in Manila last Monday. PO1 Randy Adovas, 29, assigned at the Philippine National Police Regional Special Action Unit (PNP-RSAU) at Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, died of several gunshot and stab wounds. Suspect Joseph Asilan, an employee of Transworld Brokerage Corp. and a resident of Area A Camarin Compound, Caloocan City, was arrested shortly after the incident. SPO2 William Gondranios of the Manila Police District Homicide Section said Adovas had attempted to arrest a still unidentified suspect for illegal possession of a deadly weapon, a 29-inch knife. Asilan, however, stabbed the victim while the other suspect grabbed the policeman's service firearm and shot him several times. Gondranios said the police were tracking the whereabouts of the other suspect. *Margaux C. Ortiz*

Parents, watch your kids



PARAÑAQUE policemen yesterday asked parents to keep an eye on their children following the recovery of a four-year-old boy from a suspected kidnapper on Monday. "We are asking all parents to always check on their kids especially when they are playing outside," said city police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles. Estilles added that a new kidnapping syndicate has been targeting children aged four to six in Metro Manila. The gang, he said, reportedly sell their victims as organ donors for at least P10,000. Police arrested Ruben Basario after he allegedly kidnapped a boy in Barangay San Martin de Porres in Upper Bicutan, PNR Site. Estilles said Basario could be a member of the syndicate. "We are still conducting further investigation on the suspect," Estilles told the INQUIRER yesterday. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

One-woman art show

ARTIST Gracia de Leon-Imago has captured the ephemeral beauty of butterflies on canvas in her ongoing exhibit at the National Telecommunications Commission building on BIR Road, East Triangle, Diliman, Quezon City. Aptly titled "Butterfly Series," this one-woman show is open to the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The exhibit ends tomorrow.

Abu Sayyaf kin to sue PNP

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE FAMILIES OF SLAIN ABU Sayyaf suspects killed during the Bicutan jail siege last year are set to file criminal charges against police officials behind the bloody assault.

Ren Jalaludin Ropeta, vice chair of the Moro-Christian Peoples' Alliance (MCPA) said they are now forming a legal committee, together with human rights groups, to assist families of the victims in pursuing criminal and administrative cases against members of the Philippine National Police who led in the assault on the Metro Manila District Jail in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, on March 15, 2005.

Former Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, former PNP Chief Edgar Aglipay and Chief Director General Arturo Lomibao will be among those charged, Ropeta said.

Response

Twenty-three inmates, including three top leaders of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, were killed during the siege.

A Commission on Human Rights (CHR) report on the incident said that the PNP's response to the attempted jailbreak resulted in the killing of inmates who were not part of the escape try.

The report also recommended the filing of criminal charges against the officials involved in the incident.

"Though it has taken the CHR too long to finalize its investigation, we are nevertheless glad that it stood for the truth and heeded the pleas for justice of the bereaved families of the unjustly slain Moro detainees," Ropeta said.

Hard to take

Hadji Insih Moctar, whose husband, Abu-Khayr Moctar and father, Ahmad Upao were killed during the assault, will be the primary complainant.

"My father and husband were both innocent. They were not part of the jailbreak. Their unjust killing was hard to take," she said.

Witnesses had said that Upao, a 75-year-old bedridden detainee suffering from Alzheimer's disease, survived the assault.

But he was allegedly shot by the police as he was being moved by inmates to the second floor of the jail facility.

MCPA members who visited the 120 Muslim detainees at Camp Bagong Diwa last week said they were also dismayed over the detainees' "poor" conditions inside the jail.

Some of the inmates who were hurt during the siege have not been given medical treatment until now, May Vargas, MCPA information officer told the INQUIRER.

"They need to undergo surgery, but jail officials said they lack the funds," she added.

Since the botched jailbreak and the bloody assault, the inmates were also denied their conjugal rights, Vargas said.

"The discriminatory treatment against the detainees has persisted for a year," Ropeta said.

"They have been subjected to worse detention conditions, worse even than the conditions at the maximum security prison in Muntinlupa," he added.

Appeal

He added that the Department of Interior and Local Government should recognize the inmates' appeal for humane treatment to avoid further violation of human rights.

On the other hand, jail authorities have allowed the inmates to hold prayers and religious discussions, a privilege which had been stopped after the siege.

Roldan hearing postponed for 3rd time

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOR THE THIRD TIME THIS year, the hearing for the kidnapping case filed against actor and former Quezon City Rep. Dennis Roldan was postponed.

Roldan was about to present witnesses to support his application for bail yesterday but the prosecution objected.

The actor, whose real name is Mitchell Gumabao, is accused of masterminding the kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in February 2005. His group allegedly demanded at least P250 million in ransom at the start of the negotiations—an allegation he had denied.

"This is just a motion for bail. The court should just decide based on the evidences and witnesses presented by the prosecution," prosecutor Philip Dela Cruz told the INQUIRER yesterday.

He said that based on court rules, petition for bail hearings should be "summary in nature."

Purpose-defeating

If the defense was allowed to present evidence, Dela Cruz added, this would turn the hearing "into a trial on the merits, defeating the summary purpose of the bail hearing."

Sought for comment, Roldan's lawyer, Karl Arian Castillo, said they just wanted "to exercise (their) right to due process."

"We want the proceedings to be speedy—but that is not happening," Castillo added.

The charges against Roldan are not bailable. However, the actor, in his petition for bail, had said that the evidence against him was not strong.

Because of the prosecution's objection, Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 261 Judge Agnes Reyes-Carpio asked the prosecution and the defense to submit a position paper on Friday.

Hearing reset

She also reset the hearing on April 11.

The prosecution has already presented at least 10 witnesses, including policemen who testified they saw Roldan in the safehouses were the boy was brought, and the boy's mother who claimed she had negotiated with Roldan for her son's release.

The defense was about to present witnesses on January 31, but Carpio failed to show up at the hearing because she was sick.

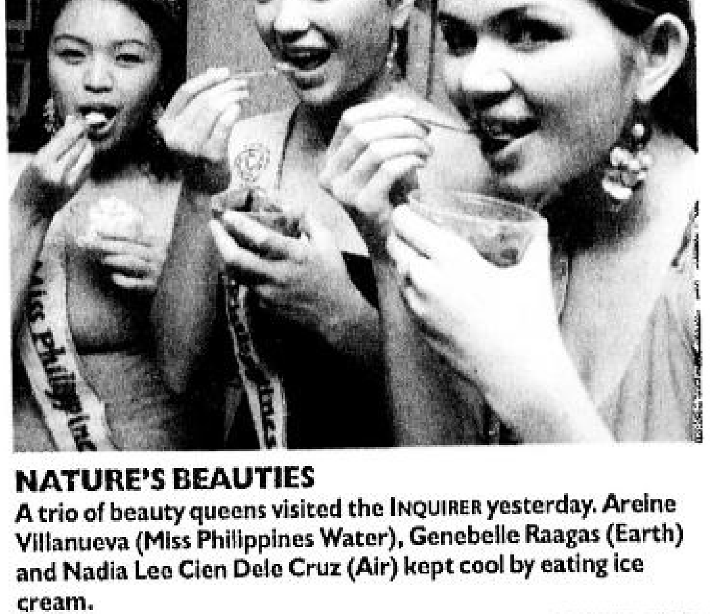
The hearing was reset on February 21, exactly a year after Roldan was arrested in his house in Quezon City. But the lawyer of accused Noel San Andres, who was to testify in Roldan's favor, came late and after Carpio had already suspended the hearing due to his absence. Carpio also took a one-month mandatory leave which ended last week.

Prosecution scared?

"Maybe the prosecution is just afraid (of my client's testimony)," lawyer Dodgie Encinas, lawyer of accused San Andres, said.

Roldan, San Andres and his wife Rowena, Romeo Orcajada and Adrian Domingo are detained at the Pasig City Jail while accused Octavio Garces is detained at the Philippine National Police Custodial Service.

Alberto Pagdanganan had turned state witness while accused Suzette Wang, Roldan's alleged girlfriend and fellow mastermind, has remained at large.



NATURE'S BEAUTIES
A trio of beauty queens visited the INQUIRER yesterday. Areine Villanueva (Miss Philippines Water), Genebelle Raagas (Earth) and Nadia Lee Cien Dele Cruz (Air) kept cool by eating ice cream.

STARTING THEM YOUNG

Eight-month-old baby enjoying a dive in Athens March 27. Doctors say that swimming can help babies' circulatory and respiratory systems, assist in strengthening their muscles and improving their posture. AP

Vietnam to host int'l meet on effects of Agent Orange

HANOI—VIETNAM WAS SET TO HOST AN international conference Tuesday on the effects of the Vietnam War defoliant Agent Orange, bringing together veterans and delegates from at least six countries.

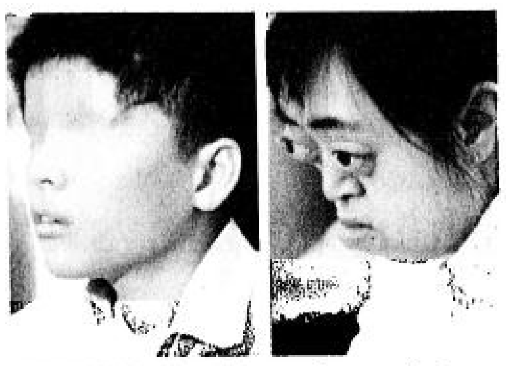
Vietnamese civilians and soldiers from all sides of the conflict claim health defects from the chemical that US forces used to strip away jungle cover and destroy food crops.

Victims from Vietnam and elsewhere have been fighting for compensation from Monsanto Corp., Dow Chemical and other former producers of the toxic chemical, which was named after its orange-striped containers.

A New York court last year dismissed a Vietnamese lawsuit representing millions of victims. The Vietnamese team has launched an appeal.

"To fight and defeat the Americans in the war was difficult," professor Nguyen Trong Nhan, vice president of the Vietnam Dioxin/Agent Orange Victims Association, said. "Winning in court is even more difficult.

"Even if we have sufficient evidence about our victims, the American judges can always reject it."



VIETNAM'S alleged Agent Orange victims Le Van O (left) and Van Long. AFP

Nhan said the two-day meeting would bring together veterans and campaigners from Vietnam, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Canada.

His group says that between 1961 and 1971, the US military dropped more than 100,000 tons of toxic chemicals on southern Vietnam, exposing anywhere between 2.1 million and 4.8 million people. *AFP*

US immigration bill advances as protests spread

WASHINGTON—AN IMMIGRATION reform bill that would create a guest worker program pushed by President George W. Bush won approval on Monday from a US Senate panel against a backdrop of noisy and emotional protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Detroit.

The Senate is struggling to enact compromise legislation to better secure America's borders while offering millions a chance to be in the country legally, setting up a politically bruising battle with the US House of Representatives, where the Republican majority has come out against legal incentives.

The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the measure on a 12-6 vote. It goes to the full Senate later this week, where a heated debate is expected over the guest worker program, which critics call an amnesty for some illegal immigrants.

The committee's action came as President George W. Bush warned on Monday against fearmongering on the divisive issue.

"No one should play on people's fears or try to pit neighbors against each other," Bush said. "No one should pretend that immigrants are a threat to American identity, because immigrants have shaped America's identity."

Provisions of the measure that would allow some of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants a chance to legalize their status and earn citizenship will set the stage for a bruising election-year battle with the House, where many of the Republican majority oppose incentives for illegal immigrants.

But Senate backers said it is not an amnesty.

"A path to earned citizenship is what this bill is about," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican who joined Massachusetts Democrat Sen. Edward Kennedy in offering the measure. He said it was "an eleven-year journey" to earn citizenship and candidates would have to pay a fine, undergo criminal background checks, learn English and pay their taxes.

Senate Judiciary Committee chair Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican, called it a "a measured bill."

With his job approval rating at a low ebb, Bush is facing a new test of his political strength during a mid-term election year, weeks after Republicans deserted him on a controversial deal to allow an Arab company to manage six US ports.

In Los Angeles on Monday, hundreds of mostly Latino students blocked two major downtown freeways, chanting in Spanish and waving flags from Mexico and El Salvador. Traffic was snarled until police could move the students off the road but no accidents, injuries or arrests were reported.

In Boston, more than 2000 people gathered in the city's common, waving Latin American, Caribbean and Irish flags while marching downtown and calling for urgent immigration reform.

"I'm here to support the Hispanic community," said Amilcar Gonzalez, a 23-year-old illegal janitor from Guatemala. "We are not terrorists, we just want to work." *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Afghanistan to free convert facing death

ABDUL Rahman AFP

KABUL/WASHINGTON—Afghanistan will free a man who could have faced the death penalty for converting from Islam to Christianity after the West pressed Kabul for his release, a US state department spokesperson said on Monday. But the prosecutor in charge of the case and Afghan presidential officials were not available for comment. UN officials said the man was seeking asylum abroad, but a solution to the case was still some way off. The case raised a storm of protests in the West, threatening to open a rift between Afghanistan and its Western backers who called for the man's release. About 1,000 angry Afghans protested on Monday and called for the man to be executed. Abdur Rahman, 40, was jailed this month for rejecting Islam and converting to Christianity. Islamic sharia law prescribes the death penalty for apostasy—abandoning the faith. Rahman became a Christian while working for an aid group helping Afghan refugees in Pakistan 15 years ago. He later lived in Germany before returning to Afghanistan. He was detained after his relatives told authorities he had converted to Christianity, apparently following a dispute involving two daughters. *Reuters*

France braces for strikes over youth jobs

PARIS—Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to join a national strike in France on Tuesday in a bid to force Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin to abandon a new job law that makes firing young workers easier. The standoff over the CPE First Job Contract is the toughest test to date for Villepin, who has refused to withdraw a measure which critics say will create a generation of "throwaway workers" and fail in its aim to cut high youth unemployment. The politically potent combination of demonstrations and strikes is likely to cause travel chaos for commuters, as well as air and train users, with rail workers beginning their 36-hour stoppage late on Monday. Employees from the postal service, schools and the media, among others, are expected to join the strike, which has been called to coincide with nationwide protests. With unions estimating at least 135 demonstrations will take place on Tuesday, some political commentators fear violence could flare, as was the case during protests in Paris last week. *Reuters*

Liberia's Taylor disappears

ABUJA, Nigeria—Former Liberian leader and war crimes suspect Charles Taylor has disappeared from the villa in which he was living in exile in this country, the Nigerian presidency said in a statement Tuesday. The statement said Taylor had left his house in Calabar some time on Monday night and President Olusegun Obasanjo, who on Saturday had said that Taylor would be handed back to Liberia, had set up a panel to investigate. Obasanjo's spokesperson, Remi Oyo, added: "All the security people who were in charge of looking after Mr. Taylor have been arrested." A five-member panel would investigate who was responsible for the disappearance and "ascertain whether he escaped or was abducted." *AFP*

Ex-Ukraine PM wants job back

TYMOSHENKO REUTERS

KIEV—Ukrainian firebrand politician Yulia Tymoshenko, buoyed by a strong election showing, on Monday demanded her job as prime minister back as the price for joining a liberal alliance to keep Moscow-backed parties out of office. Her demand reopened a running feud with President Viktor Yushchenko, her erstwhile ally in Ukraine's democratic "Orange Revolution," who sacked her as premier last year. With just over half the ballots counted, the largest number of votes had gone to the Regions Party of former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. He initially won a presidential election with Moscow's support in 2004 until mass protests against fraud led to the result being overturned, ushering Yushchenko in. But Tymoshenko's showing, pushing Yushchenko's Our Ukraine into third place, meant the liberal parties could still combine for an overall majority if they could resolve their differences. *Reuters*

Israelis set to vote

JERUSALEM—Israelis vote in an election on Tuesday billed by Interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as a referendum on his plan to uproot some Jewish settlements and set Israel's borders if peace efforts with Palestinians stay frozen. *Reuters*

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

White House dodged 9/11 jet-missile

Moussaoui says he was supposed to fly 5th plane

ALEXANDRIA, VA.—ZACARIAS MOUSSAOUI SAID ON Monday he was supposed to fly a fifth airplane into the White House as part of the Sept. 11 plot and knew two other planes were to fly into New York's World Trade Center.

Taking the stand at his sentencing trial, Moussaoui—the only person charged in the United States in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks—said "shoe-bomber" Richard Reid was to join him as part of the crew in the suicide mission.

Reid failed in an attempt to blow up an American Airlines plane from Paris to Miami in December 2001 after passengers and crew tackled him as he tried to ignite explosives in his shoe.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment in January 2003.

Moussaoui's claim contradicted what he said last year in pleading guilty: That he was not supposed to be part of the Sept. 11 hijackings but was meant to be in a second wave of al-Qaida attacks and fly an airplane into the White House.

Moussaoui said he did not know the precise date of the planned attacks when he was arrested in Minnesota on Aug. 16, 2001, and had only scant details of the overall plan.

"I had knowledge that the two towers would be hit but I didn't have the detail," said Moussaoui, dressed in a green prisoner jumpsuit and white cap.

Asked by Gerald Zerkin, one of his attorneys, if he was meant to be part of the Sept. 11 attacks, Moussaoui said: "Yes, I was supposed to pilot a plane to hit the White House."

But shortly after Moussaoui testified, comments by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—the operational mastermind of the Sept. 11 hijackings—contradicted the claim.

Mohammed, who is being detained by the United States and is testifying through written statements approved by the defense and the prosecution, said Moussaoui was meant to be part of a second wave of attacks—not the Sept. 11 hijackings.

Moussaoui, who testified for nearly three hours, is on trial now to determine if he will be executed.

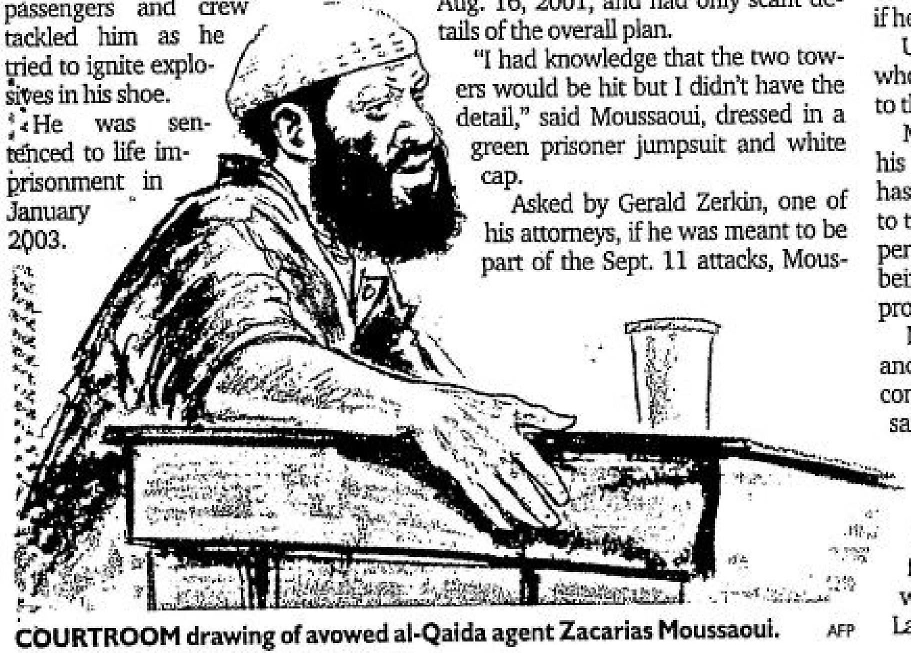
US District Judge Leonie Brinkema, who is hearing the case, said it could go to the jury as early as Wednesday.

Moussaoui—who does not talk with his court-appointed lawyers whom he has repeatedly tried to fire—had vowed to testify in the trial, though defense experts had said he would likely end up being one of the best witnesses for the prosecution.

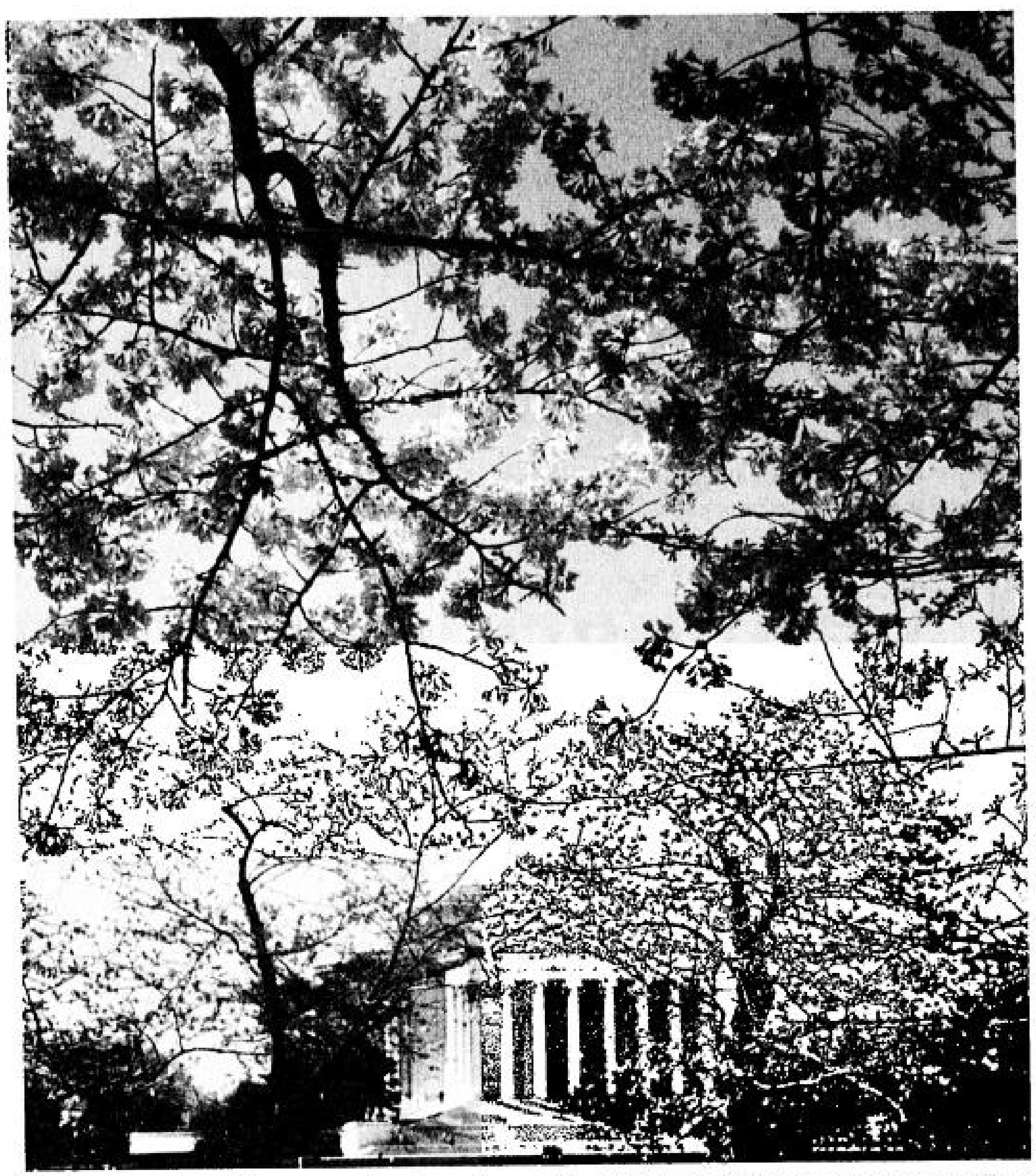
Moussaoui, who appeared very calm and spoke in a matter-of-fact manner in contrast to earlier courtroom outbursts, said he was asked in 1999 if he wanted to be a suicide pilot but he initially declined.

He agreed to take part in the plan in 2000 after having a dream about flying a plane into the White House, which he talked about with Osama bin Laden.

Reuters



COURTROOM drawing of avowed al-Qaida agent Zacarias Moussaoui. AFP



THE BUDS begin to blossom on the cherry trees at the Tidal Basin in Washington on March 27. AP

40 Iraqis killed in suicide attack on Army base

BAGHDAD—A SUICIDE BOMBER KILLED AT least 40 people waiting outside an Iraqi Army recruitment center amid rising tension between the dominant Shiite leaders and US forces over a deadly night raid in Baghdad.

Ten other Iraqis were killed in separate rebel violence across Iraq on Monday, seven of them in mortar attacks in south Baghdad which wounded 35 others, while 16 trading company employees were kidnapped by gunmen in the capital.

The suicide bombing on the recruitment center at an Iraqi Army base called Tamarat near the town of Tal Afar, close to the Syrian border was the deadliest single attack in Iraq since a January assault on police recruits in Ramadi.

A militant coalition led by al-Qaida's Iraq branch claimed the blast and identified the suicide bomber as a Saudi.

"A brother ... from Mohammed's Peninsula (Saudi Arabia) ... wearing an explosives belt plunged this morning into the crusaders' base northeast of Tal Afar and infiltrated among hundreds of recruits before blowing himself up," said the statement on the Internet by the Mujahedeen Consultative Council.

The council, established in January, groups seven Sunni Muslim armed factions and is dominated by al-Qaida's Iraqi branch led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The attack came hours after US-backed Iraqi special forces carried out a Sunday night raid in northeast Baghdad killing at least 16 Shiites and triggering a raft of anti-US reactions from the dominant Shiite political parties.

President Jalal Talabani ordered an investigation in the raid.

"This is a grave and dangerous incident," Talabani told reporters.

The Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), which holds the largest bloc of seats in the parliament and controls the government, vociferously condemned the action which it said targeted a mosque full of worshippers.

"US forces and Iraqi special forces committed a heinous crime by attacking the Mustafa mosque in the neighborhood of Ur," said Jawad Maliki, the number two of outgoing Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari's Dawa Party, reading from a statement.

In a slap at the Americans, Maliki called on the Iraqi security forces to take full charge of security in the country.

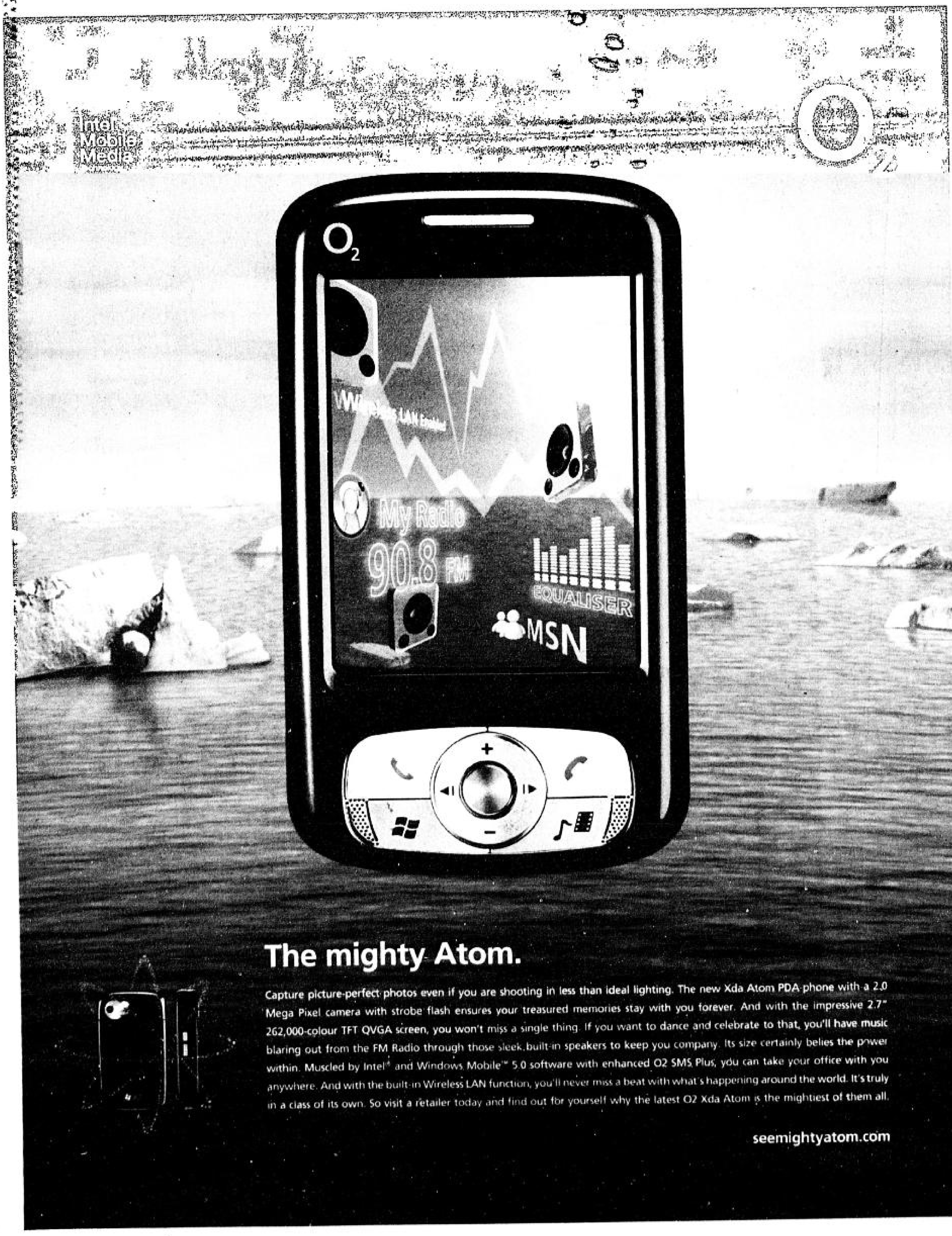
The US military said the operation was against an insurgent cell and did not involve any mosque.

"Iraqi commandos and soldiers from the Iraqi counter-terrorism force killed 16 insurgents and wounded three others during a house-to-house search on an objective with multiple structures," the US military said in a statement.

The military admitted that members of the US special forces were present in an advisory capacity but said that "no mosques were entered or damaged during this operation."

Large numbers of weapons were found, including dozens of assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades and launchers, two heavy machine guns and material to make explosives, it said.

AFP



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Compiled by L. Manguiat

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FOOTBALL: UEFA Champions League Quarterfinals; tomorrow at 2:30 a.m.; STAR Sports—Olympique Lyonnais battles AC Milan.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS

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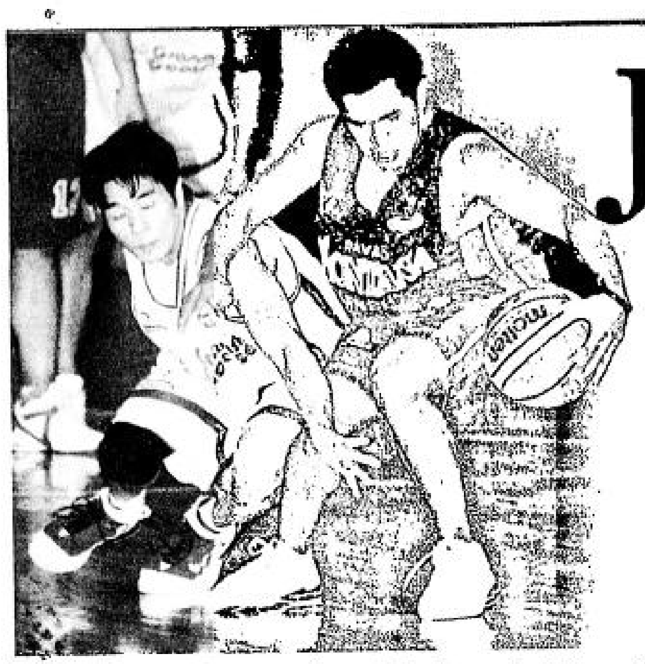


MONTAÑA'S Al Vergara tries to elude the pesky defense of Granny Goose's Marvin Cruz in yesterday's game. RYAN LIM

Jewels foil former coach

Williams imposes might as Spinners turn back Titans

By Jasmine W. Payo

BEATING THEIR FORMER COACH wasn't the motivation, but the Montaña Jewels came well prepared for the Granny Goose Tortillos yesterday.

Turning to veterans Alex Compton and Eric dela Cuesta, the Jewels thwarted the resilient Tortillos, 66-58, to claim an early 2-0 lead in the PBL Unity Cup at the San Andres Gym.

"We're here to win, that's our mission," said Jewels coach Nel Parado, who replaced Robert Sison two weeks ago. "We always play our best. We came well prepared for this game."

Compton and Dela Cuesta shot 15 points apiece, while hefty center Ken Bono contributed 13 markers.

Sison recently quit Montaña over disagreements with the management. A week later, Sison crossed over to Granny Goose to be its new head coach.

Earlier, the Magnolia Spinners again banked on Kelly Williams' imposing presence to drub newcomer TeleTech Titans, 57-46.

The 6-foot-7 Williams, last conference's Finals MVP, poured in 22 points and grabbed 18 rebounds to lead the Spinners to their first win in two games.

"Our loss last Saturday was a wake-up call," said coach Koy Banal after the Spinners recovered from an opening-day loss, 64-55, to Granny Goose. "I gave them a lesson on mental toughness and it paid off."

The turning point for the Jewels came when Al Magpayo buried a triple to lift the seasoned squad ahead for good, 59-53, with 1:37 left.

GAMES TOMORROW
(San Andres Gym)
2 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs Harbour Centre
4 p.m.—Rain or Shine vs Toyota Otis

PBL scores

First Game

MAGNOLIA 57— Willams 22, Santos 9, Valenzuela 9, Misolas 7, Chan 5, Bombeo 3, Isip 2, Co 0, Te 0, Jones 0, Barcellano 0.

TELETECH 46—Gelig 16, Doruelo 12, Capus 7, Latoreno 4, Villamin 3, Aquino 2, Mendoza 2, Mercado 0, Bughao 0, Estrada 0, Duncil 0, Magdadaro 0, Tolentino 0.

Quarters: 12-9, 26-24, 44-37, 57-46

Second Game

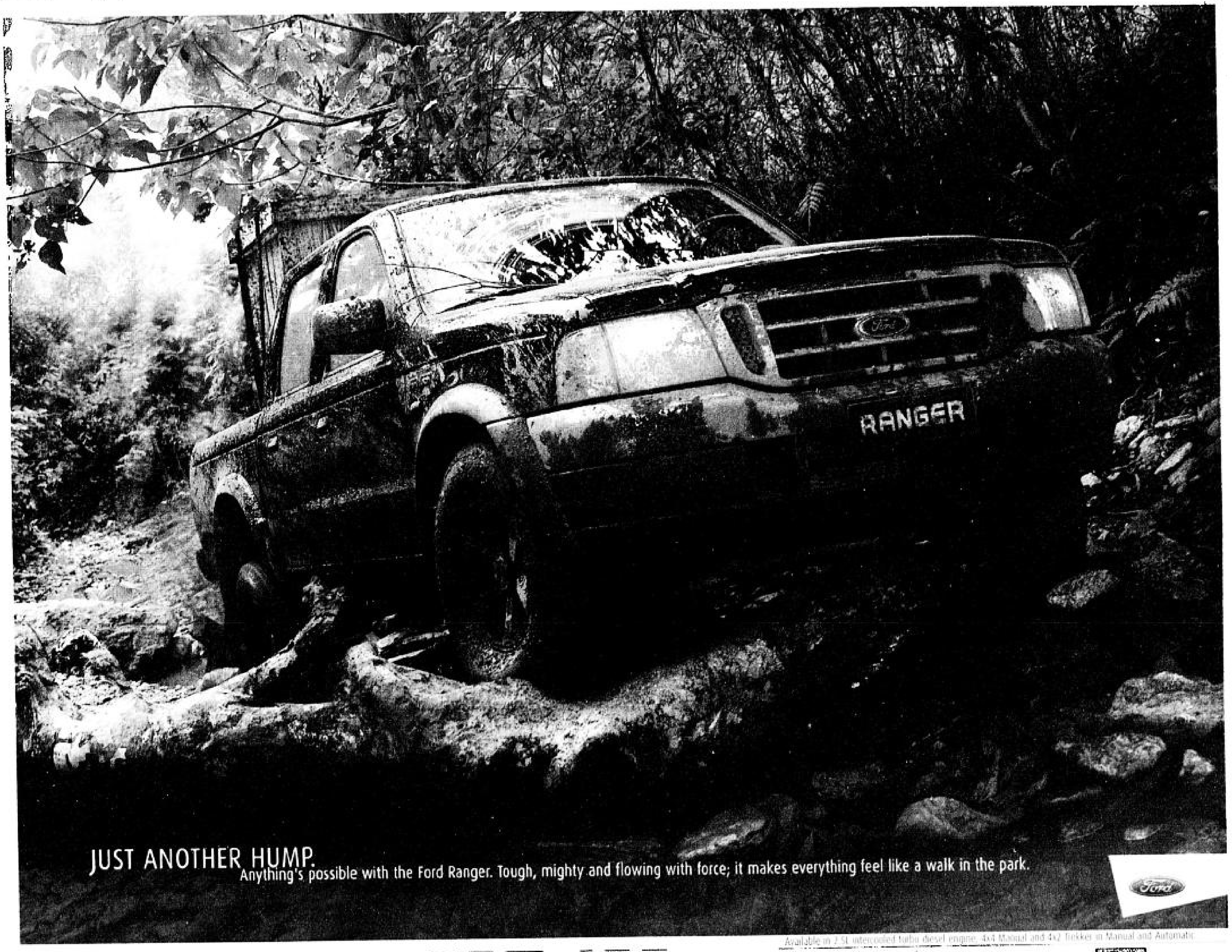
MONTAÑA 66—Dela Cuesta 15, Compton 15, Bono 13, Magpayo 11, Baguion 5, Espiritu 4, Vergara 3, Juntilla 0, Guerrero 0, Rodriguez 0, Evangelista 0, Atablanco 0.

GRANNY GOOSE 58—Quiñahan 12, Latonio 10, Cruz 8, Dela Peña 7, Ibañes 7, Santos 7, Grijaldo 4, Concha 3, Alfad 0, Ababon 0.

Quarters: 11-11, 32-30, 46-42, 66-58

Viloria rematch on cards

FIL-CANADIAN BRIAN Viloria doesn't mind giving Mexican Jose Antonio Aguirre another crack at his World Boxing Council light flyweight crown. He wants an even more convincing win than the unanimous decision he earned in their first showdown on Feb. 18 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Reports indicate that both camps are currently negotiating for a rematch. Filipino Juanito Rubillar, the mandatory challenger to Viloria's title, has been lobbying with the WBC for a crack at Viloria's title, although Viloria had initially balked at the idea of fighting a compatriot. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*



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Red Bull	2	2
Air21	2	3
Ginebra	2	3
Talk 'N Text	2	3
Sta. Lucia	1	3

GAMES TODAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Red Bull vs Air21
7:35 p.m.—Sta. Lucia Realty vs San Miguel Beer

Express out to halt Bulls stampede

AIR21 FEELS IT HAS A SCORE TO SETTLE against Red Bull while San Miguel is simply hoping to continue its winning ways as both the Express and the Beermen hope to get the job done today in the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"We met them twice and lost on both occasions," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol, referring to their Red Bull assignments in the elimination round of the recent Fiesta Cup won by the Bulls.

After snapping out of a two-game losing spell with a victory over the favored Barangay Ginebra Kings, the Express face another tough test in a game where the frontline will play a crucial role.

The Ateneo connection of Enrico Villanueva, Paolo Bugia and Rich Alvarez is formidable enough. And there's the 7-foot EJ Feihl and the 6-foot-9 Mick Pennisi, who can both create added problems for the Express.

"It's going to be a good matchup," said Perasol, hinging his frontline plans on Yancy and Ranidel De Ocampo, Mark Telan and Homer Se.

"They can be small and quick and at the same time, be tall and tough inside the paint."

The Bulls have the luxury, indeed, of going small and quick with the likes of Cyrus Baguio, Lordy Tugade, Larry Fonacier and Topex Robinson. But it's not a luxury they can turn into an edge.

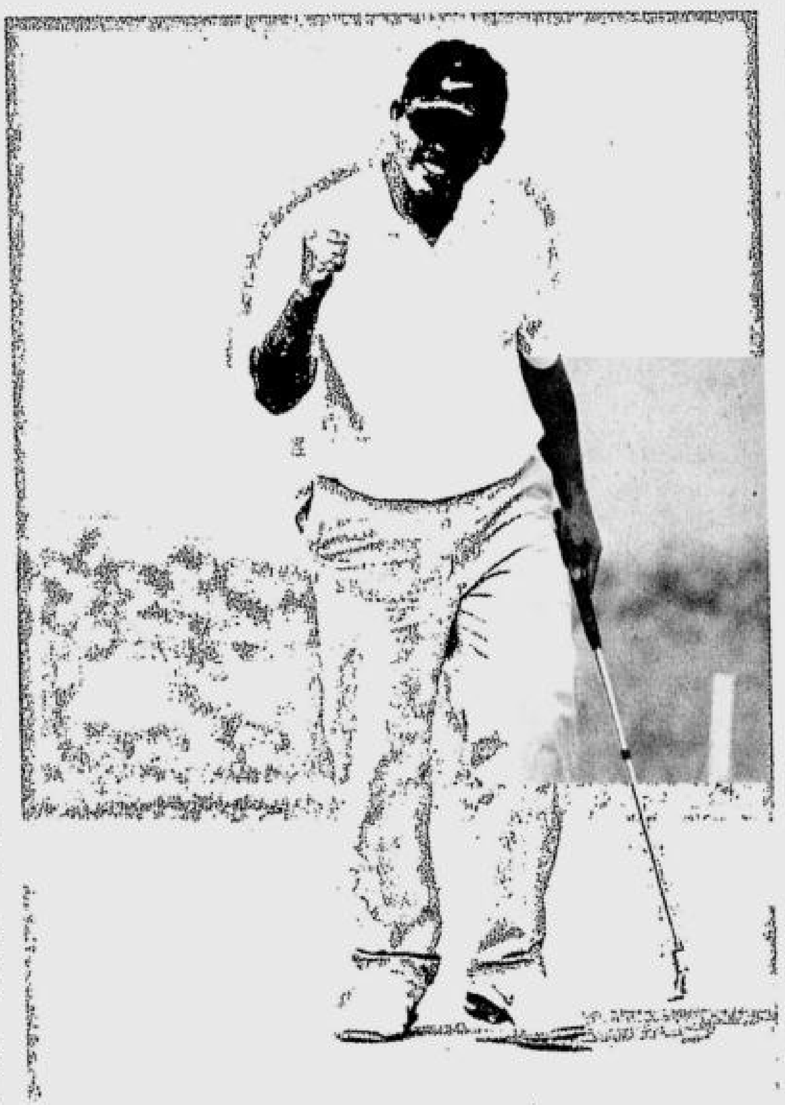
In the other game, the Beermen collide with the Sta. Lucia Realtors in what could be a night of career accomplishments for Olsen Racela and Marlou Aquino.

The 6-foot-9 Aquino is five blocks away from becoming the sixth player—after Ramon Fernandez, Philip Cezar, Benjie Paras, Jerry Codiñera and Abet Guidaben—to compile 900 blocks.

Racela, San Miguel's cerebral playmaker, needs 27 minutes of playing time tonight to breach the 20,000 mark. *June Navarro*

Bernis shows way with 69

By Musong R. Castillo



JUN Bernis celebrates his birdie from eight feet on the 12th. JUN RAPANAN

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—JUN BERNIS FIRED a 3-under-par 69 in the stifling hot conditions yesterday to take a two-shot lead after the first round of the 11th DHL Amateur Open.

The 34-year-old former winner canned four birdies against a bogey at Cangolf's North course here to lead Canlubang teammates Ronnie Torrecampo and Mark Fernando by two.

"This tournament has been very kind to me," Bernis, the 2004 winner and fourth placer last year, said in Filipino. "The course did not play that tough because of the lack of winds."

The top 20 players submitted 76s or better with obscure Ferdinand Aunzo in solo fourth after matching par and jungolf standout Tonlits Asistio and Singapore's Quincy Quek sharing fifth spot with 73s.

Philippine pool members Jay Bayron and Erwin Vinluan assembled 74s for seventh spot, while Boyet Saragoza and former Singapore Am winner Michael Bibat were in a six-man group in ninth place after carding identical 75s.

Newly crowned National Caddies' Open champion Jessie Balasabas dropped five shots in his last four holes and settled for a 76 to share 15th spot with five others, including Singaporean Jonathan Leong.

A total of 71 players teed off in the men's tournament. Nineteen players see action in the 54-hole women's event starting today.

Carmelette Villaroman, the former RP Ladies' champ, and 14-year-old Bacolod standout Mia Piccio are entered in the women's field that has a merry mix of the old and young.

Singaporean spearhead Choo Tze Huang, winner of the silver medal behind Juvic Pagunsan in the Southeast Asian Games last year, was the only notable outside the top 20.

Huang opened with a bogey, stumbled with a double bogey on the par-4 seventh and turned in a 40 coming in en route to a 78, good for a tie for 28th spot with five others.

The only blemish in Bernis' 35-34 card came at the 344-yard, par-4 eighth hole, where he failed to hit the green after landing his drive next to a huge tree.

His longest putt for birdie was from eight feet, and he had a similar putt for eagle on the 494-yard, par-5 14th after a monster drive left him with a 9-iron for his second shot.

Torrecampo had nines of 35-36 built around birdies on Nos. 4, 5, 9 and 12.

POC assembly accepts Pilipinas Basketball

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE WELCOMED to its fold Pilipinas Basketball during yesterday's general assembly—but with a condition.

The formal acceptance of Pilipinas Basketball, which is being penciled to supplant the expelled Basketball Association of the Philippines, will still hinge on a positive result from a trip to Korea that representatives of the country's four major basketball stakeholders will make on April 4.

The condition stands on shaky ground because a fifth stakeholder—required by the international basketball federation (Fiba) as one of the prerequisites for the lifting of a 10-month old ban keeping the country out of international meets—continues to hold out from the group.

BAP president Joey Lina, named as the other stakeholder along with the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA, continues to vouch for the legitimacy of his association.

"We will be in Seoul [South Korea] not only to present the constitution and by-laws of Pilipinas Basketball but also the sentiment of the basketball stakeholders in the country," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala, who will make the trip along with PBA chair Ely Capacio.

But not all governors are on his side. Air21 representative Lito Alvarez is calling on the former sports broadcaster to rethink his participation in the new association.

"I am reminding Commissioner Eala to first clear with the PBA Board any statement/s related to Pilipinas Basketball," said Alvarez in a statement.

PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad is confident that the Fiba will finally relent because the new cage body abided by the conditions embodied in the memorandum of understanding forged by the POC and the Fiba—except for the signature of Lina.

Also yesterday, Manny Lopez was named POC second vice president, replacing Reynaldo Jaylo, who stepped down. Sepak takraw's Mario Tanchangco was elected deputy chief of mission as the POC reserved the position of the head of delegation for First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

Pacman hard-sells recycled Mexican meat

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

LAST-MINUTE CALLS WERE UNNECESSARY. The grand media affair at the Manila Hotel last Friday was already a sellout even before organizers could announce it.

Unlike with his beloved President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, there's no need anymore to sell Manny Pacquiao.

The fellow has become more famous and necessary than Her Excellency.

So did Eric Pineda, top man at Manny Pacquiao Promotions, and lovely wife Macy, have to worry about attendance?

The problem here is no longer Pacquiao, the main merchandise in the July 2 boxing blockbuster at the Araneta Coliseum which Pacman has himself agreed to promote.

It's the quality of opposition. Oscar Larios, who agreed to slug it out with Pacquiao only after being offered $450,000, happens to be a certified loser.

He was last beaten by Israel Vasquez, a favorite sparmate of Pacquiao's at Wild Card, for the WBC and IBF superbantam titles.

* * *

In order to sell Larios, Pacquiao handlers, including trainer Freddie Roach and manager Shelly Finkel, had to pay Lito Atienza's Manila a quickie visit over the weekend on an urgent mission.

An alteration of existing fight facts had to be executed.

They teamed up, somewhat frantically, to picture Larios as a certified winner, every pound, every inch fit to do battle with the very famous Pacman.

Finkel, his glossy pate glowing under the flash of cameras, said something like Larios was always capable of throwing the most number of punches in a single round.

Roach followed up with a warning. He mumbled, rather stammered, that Pacquiao can't afford to be less fit and ready than he was against Erik Morales last January.

* * *

They did not say it. But there was also the quiet effort to tell everybody Pacquiao should brace for a possible defeat (against Larios).

Then, joining the team of worriers, broadcast impresario Peter Musngi bared that his outfit, ABS-CBN, would bring in Larios for a sales tour here sometime late next month.

Finkel, Roach, and Pacman himself. No prizefight sales team could be more awesome.

But Larios himself had to join in. The crafty, five-foot-eight Mexicano ring craftsman would be here to demonstrate that he, who had reigned long as world 122-lbs king, is no recycled old meat.

We will never know what they would do next until Larios has hit town.

Maybe they would hire Pacquiao's barber to spar with the Mexicano in public?

* * *

Here's one Ali-inspired tip. To push the effort a notch higher, they could script a Pacquiao knockdown while the national boxing icon spars in public.

Actually, Pacman did suffer a stoppage, a rude one, when he was recently rushed and confined at the Cardinal Santos Hospital, suffering from fatigue.

Told that he has visibly put on weight, a pudgy Pacquiao clarified that it was all a result of the confinement.

"*Ito, tabang* dextrose *ito*," he quipped from the presidential table during the Elorde Memorial Awards at Dusit Hotel Friday night.

* * *

If there's a guy who's genuinely worried, it's not anyone among Pacquiao's handlers.

It's the super warrior himself.

Here's why: Pacquiao would not be caught showing up in a recycled *ukay-ukay* suit for his July 2 daytime show at the Big Dome.

His poor countrymen may have been made to patronize hand-me-downs under this regime, but Pacquiao wanted to give that pitiful existence a lovely twist.

Yes, Pacquiao assured, the fight would be a dream come true, a first-class gift to his countless admirers here who had all clamored to watch him do battle—live.

Anyway, despite the deafening sales pitch, only one thing has so far been assured. Pacquiao won't be caught coming in half-ready, as he did when he ran out of gas in his last hometown fight against Fahsan 3-K Battery at The Fort in Taguig.

They are setting up two preparation camps, first in Hollywood, later in Baguio.

Not enough. Larios had to be peddled as extremely dangerous.

So here's Shelly Finkel for a final pitch: "Larios lost to Vasquez because he got fagged out fighting at 122 lbs against Vasquez. He was a scarecrow. Not anymore. Larios would be a really dangerous, very competitive foe for Manny at 130, his perfect fighting weight."

Larios, you bet, will be sweet, juicy recycled steak.

Dandan rallies, saves day for outgunned RP bets

KYLE JOSHUA DANDAN SURVIVED a brutal massacre of Filipino wild cards yesterday, battling back from a set down to nip China's Zhou Qingzhou, 1-6, 6-4, 7-5, at the start of the 17th Mitsubishi Lancer junior championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The 16-year-old Dandan eased the misery of Filipinos in the tourney heavy with foreign flavor.

Pablo Olivarez II bowed to Indonesia's Agung Dewontoro, 7-6, 6-1, to touch off the rout.

Australia's Jason Lee routed Mark Balce, Japan's Fumiaki Kita blasted Raymond Villarete, 6-2, 6-2, Korea's Choi Jae-won drubbed Ralph Kevin Barte, 6-4, 6-1.

Other results: Yan B. (CHI) d. C. Sundberg (NOR), 6-1, 6-0; M. Kamenik (CZE) d. S. Childs (UK), 6-3, 6-4; R. Bellamy (AUS) d. SP Gupta (INA), 7-6, 6-3; Peng HY (TAI) d. G. Tomita (JPN), 6-4, 6-1, 7-6; Y. Thomet (FRA) d. B. Cox (US), 6-4, 3-6, 6-2; P. Sirluehawat (THA) d. Ivan Anikov (UKR), 6-7, 6-5, 6-2.

an Mig
WELCOME SENIOR
WHEN: MARCH 24, 2006
EASTRIDGE

SENIOR GOLF CHAMPS: Category winners in the recent first leg of the San Mig Sugar Free Coffee Senior Golf Series at Eastridge in Antipolo City—(second from left) retired Gen. Clyde Fernandez, Class A; Louie Advincula, Class C; Art Ampaya, Class B; and Frisco San Juan, Class E—with Eastridge Senior Golfers president Raul Peñaranda (left), Federation of Philippine Amateur Senior Golfers Inc. president Abe Villanueva (extreme right), and San Mig Coffee's Miss Melanie.

PBA cager faces raps

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

THE THIN, BALD PBA cager must be residing in my neighborhood because we patronize the same Shell station along Quezon Avenue that recently filed a damage to property suit against him.

According to a station attendant, the cager drove in flat at 6 o'clock one morning and headed straight for the air pump.

Either he had been up all night or he had gotten up from the wrong side of the bed, because the cager lost his cool when he saw the sign "Out of Order."

"*Galit na galit ho na kinuha 'yung kanyang* golf club *at pinagpapalo 'yung* air gauge *hanggang mabasag. Nung maputol 'yung* golf club, *initsa niya at tinamaan ang paa ko*," the attendant related.

I said the cager could have been in a sour mood because he was late for a golf game. The station boy said the cager looked like he had not had any sleep at all.

"*Mukha hong bangag at pauwi pa lang*," he said.

* * *

Frankly, I can't imagine how the projected game between the PBA All-Star team and the NBA (former) All-Star selection, led by Dennis Rodman, will turn out.

PBA director for marketing Jack Ruby, assessing Rodman's six other teammates who must all be over 50, placed his bet on the PBA all-stars who, although shorter, are much younger and therefore faster and more energetic.

Promoter Mario Whitmire, who is bringing the NBA group here, let out a howl of protest but accepted Jack's challenge.

If the PBA wins, Mario said he would shave his head. But if the NBA prevails, he said Jack should shave his.

I don't think Jack accepted the wager.

* * *

The NBA All-Stars are supposed to play two games in the Philippines—one against the national team at the Araneta Coliseum on May 1, the other against the PBA All-Stars in Mandaue City on April 27.

The PBA All-Star week will be staged in Cagayan de Oro City on April 27, 28 and 29.

Rodman will play alongside Alex English, Kevin Willis, Darryl Dawkins, Calvin Murphy, Sidney Moncrief and Otis Birdsong. Dawkins has conducted a couple of basketball clinics in Manila while Murphy was part of the NBA-Salem team that visited the Philippines back in the '70s. Mario will be paying the entire group $300,000 for the goodwill tour.

According to Mario, Calvin hasn't changed basically, although he has gained weight. "Who's gonna guard him?" he asked with a straight face.

Question: Will Dennis Rodman's father, Philander, who he hasn't seen for ages, try to touch base with him? Philander is married to a Filipina and has long settled in the Philippines.

From what I heard, Dennis is completely averse to a reunion with his father.

* * *

Three Filipino mountaineers will attempt to climb Mt. Everest separately in the next few years.

This is what the pretty lady reporter from ABS-CBN explained to me during the press conference for the Nike Elite Basketball Camp at the Wasabi Restaurant in Makati last Monday.

According to her, one of the climbers will be sponsored by her network, the other by GMA-7 and the third by another entity.

At about the same time, I got a text message from former sports scribe Barbette Atienza who now works for the PR department of GMA.

Barbette informed me that among the three, GMA bet Romy Garduce will be the first to make the climb.

"He's doing it this year. *'Yung* sa ABS-CBN, next year *pa*. In fact, Romy is in Nepal right now getting acclimatized."

The Mt. Everest expedition, billed as "Pinoy sa Tuktok ng Mundo," will be done for a cause, with the GMA Kapuso Foundation as the beneficiary," Barbette said.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Touch of Glory (7), Red Diamond (8), Passing Through (2), Astra Magic (4)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Loaded (8), Pangako Sa'Yo (7), Sandok (2), Formidable Jaeda (5)
Race 3—(Panta/Tri)—Mr. Bonjing (5), Besame Mucho (9), Zero Gravity (8), War General (1), Conglomerate (3)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Pasirit (4), Accomplice (5), Spoiler (6), Mucho Macho (3)
Race 5—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Zaniga (1), Manila Magic (7), Rebecca's Magic (9), Amazing Firenze (8), Sutter's Quest (6), Run Like D'Wind (4)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Golden Connection (4), Hillary (6), Tiramisu (5), Smart Choice (7)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Shutler (6), Terminator (5), Mister Cool (8), Strong Jays (7)
Race 8—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Action Mark (6), Magic Bullet (5), La Española (8), Heart of the Wind (1), Vinfa's Pride (9)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Hukom/Ingay Ingay (5), Richie Rich (7), Fly Aday Fly (6), Shifty (8), Angel Eyes (4), Guided Missile (3)

SPORTSWATCH

Paragua clinches 3rd straight title

GRANDMASTER MARK PARAGUA WON HIS THIRD TOURNAMENT IN A row by ruling the Prospero Pichay Jr. Invitational Tune-up Games Special at the Syncopados Music Bar in Malate, Manila, last Sunday. Paragua won his last assignment against NM Oliver Barbosa to finish with 6.0 points in the event hosted by National Chess Federation of the Philippines president and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay. The 22-year-old Paragua received the top purse of P10,000, sustaining his victory run that started in the 5th La Union Open title and the 2006 Candon City Open. En route to the title, Paragua bested NM Edgardo Garma, GM Joey Antonio, NM Jerome Balico, IM Chito Garma and FM Oliver Dimakiling. His only loss came at the hands of IM Richard Bitoon in the second round. NM Rolando Nolte, 12-year-old Fide Master Wesley So and the Hiarcs 9.6 software of Reginald Tee and Dari Castro wound up tied for second with 5.5 points each. Tied at 5.0 points were Dimakiling and Barbosa, followed by Antonio, IM Ronald Bancod and FM Jesse Noel Sales at 4.5 points

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

Lear, Catubay victorious

FORMER PHILIPPINE CHAMPIONS JOHNNY LEAR AND FEDERICO CATUBAY scored separate 10-round decision wins last Saturday. Lear, the former bantam king now on the comeback trail, beat local fighter Edmund Devilleres in Cagayan de Oro to raise his winning streak to four since coming back from a one-year hiatus. Catubay, who was stripped of his flyweight title early this year for his failure to defend it on time, prevailed over OPBF No. 2 junior flyweight Jung Oh-son of South Korea in Seoul. The top-ranked OPBF flyweight Catubay knocked down his opponent in the second round as he remained on course for a crack at the OPBF 112-lb title being held by Japan's Noriyuki Komatsu.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

150 entries in Las Piñas cockfest today

A CASH POT OF P300,000 IS AT STAKE IN THE FASTEST WIN ONCE-COCK Ulutan which will gather more than 150 cockers and breeders from Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Metro Manila at the Las Piñas Coliseum today. Venue manager Alex Tobias said participants may register as early as 7 a.m. The first fight unfolds at 8 a.m. Entry fee is only P2,200. The top five major prizes are first, P50,000; second, P30,000; third, P20,000; fourth, P15,000 and fifth, P8,000. For inquiries, call 873-1040 or 874-3910.

CL-Metro clash up in San Juan derby

A BIG GROUP OF COCKERS FROM CENTRAL LUZON CHALLENGES ITS Metro Manila counterparts in a super 4-cock derby today at the San Juan Coliseum. The 100-fight program is backed by Sagupaan Complexor 3000 and hosted by SJC pit manager Pete Rivera. Bannering the Central Luzon team are Mayor Carmelo Lazatin, Jun and Rudy Jingco, the Madlambayan brothers, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Oca Domingo, Peping Taba and Joel Fernando. For cockhouse reservation, call 725-6563 or 725-5369.

Makati 4-cock showdown gets going

THE SHOWDOWN OF TOP COCKERS AT THE MAKATI COLISEUM RESUMES tonight with the staging of a 4-cock derby with 50 fights on tap and B-Meg Derby Ace as sponsor. Participants will come from Rizal, Laguna, Bulacan, Cavite, Zambales, Tarlac and Metro Manila, according to host Rey Oliveros. Last Monday, 111 fights were held in the Jobo 5-Cock Derby won by Tony Tan and Ramon Mancenares (Swing), Henry Navarro (HNRG), Mayor Eddie Alarilla (Antipolo Salamat Po) and Allan Siaco (AS WG JU Listana).

BI won't release Lim despite TRO

LIM: BI says TRO covers his deportation.

By Leila B. Salaverria

DETAINED BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION of the Philippines secretary general Graham Lim will remain in the custody of the Bureau of Immigration despite the issuance of a temporary restraining order on his deportation.

Immigration Acting Commissioner Arthel Caronongan said yesterday the Court of Appeals stopped Lim's expulsion from the Philippines but not his detention at the BI cell in Bicutan, Taguig.

Lim was arrested last Friday on charges he represented himself as a Filipino. Lim is a citizen of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the BI said.

"As far as I know, there was no directive to release Lim," Caronongan said. "The TRO only stopped his deportation."

He said the BI would refer the appelate court's decision to the Office of the Solicitor General and that the bureau might contest the TRO.

Caronongan said Lim had not filed a petition for bail.

The BI commissioner has the discretion to grant bail to the bureau's detainees. But detainees are usually not granted bail when the BI Board of Commissioners has already ordered their deportation, intelligence chief Faizal Hussin said in an earlier interview.

In ruling that Lim is an alien, the BI took into account his petitions for naturalization before a Manila Regional Trial Court and the Office of the Solicitor General.

Lim had sought Malacañang's help to no avail.

He will be deported to Taiwan as soon as the BI gets clearance from government agencies that he has no pending cases.

Lim has maintained that he is a Filipino, having been born and raised in the Philippines.

Sandlot faves advance

TOUTED SQUADS FLAUNTED THEIR MIGHT at the start of the Visayas eliminations of the 10th Nestea Beach Volley Championships yesterday at the La Salle Green Hills sand court.

Foundation University and University of St. La Salle won their first two matches while co-favorite University of San Jose-Recoletos (USJ-R) hurdled its first assignment in the men's division of the summer spectacle.

Foundation's Kent Bulabon and Rolando Agus bested Colegio dela Purisima Concepcion, 25-14, before downing University of Southern Philippines, 25-19.

University of St. La Salle's Marlon Luces and Mark Sabusap matched the feat, tripping Iloilo Doctor's College, 25-17, in the morning before stopping University of San Carlos, 25-22, in the afternoon.

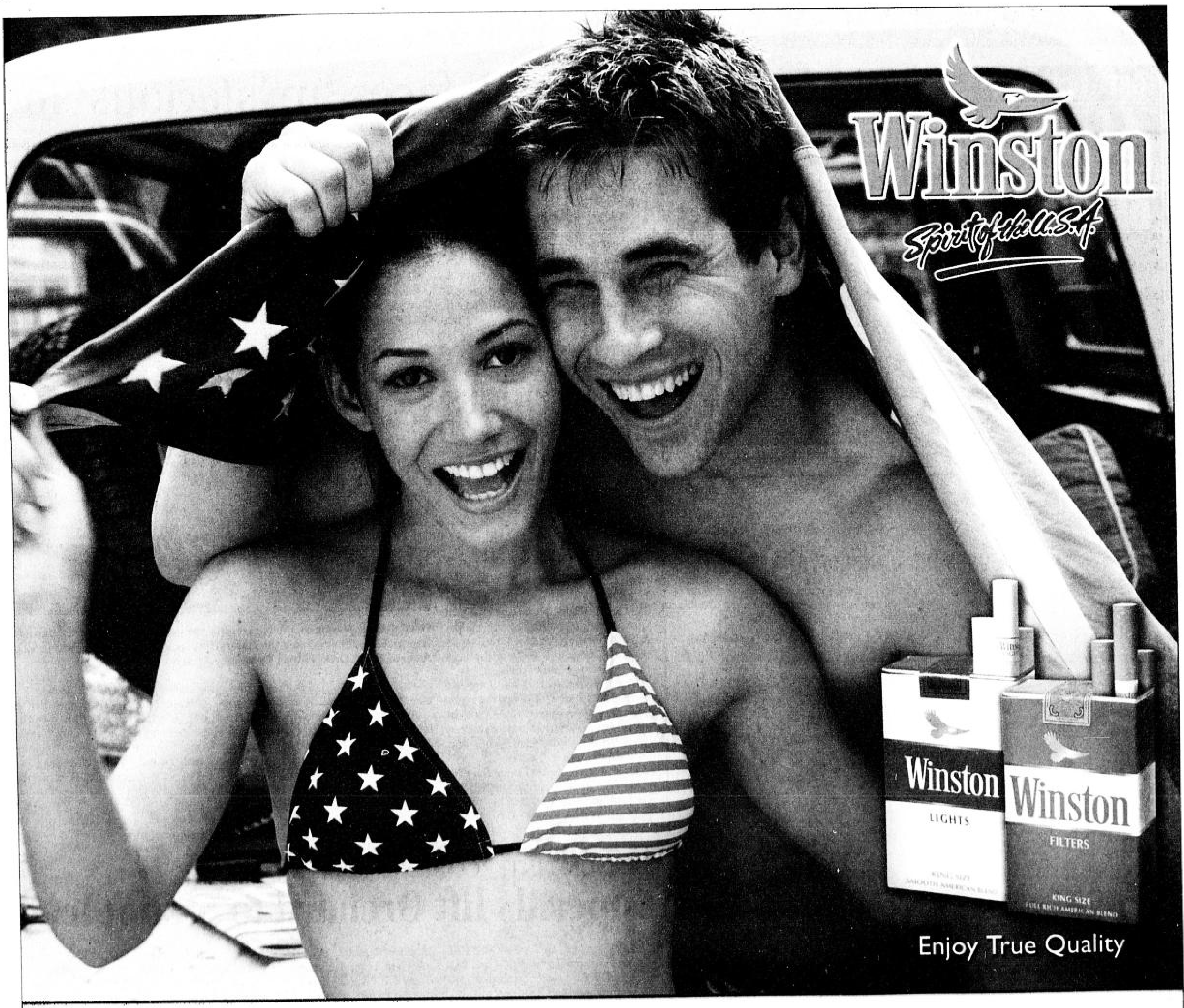
The USJ-R pair of Jonrey Sasing and Joseph Alguno, runners-up to College of St. Benilde in the 2005 finals in Boracay, put on a show in downing the University of the Visayas tandem of Jerome Capada and Jose Etcobañez, 25-14.

Foundation, St. La Salle and USJ-R are expected to figure well in the Visayas eliminations that offers four slots each for men and women in the Boracay semifinals on May 4 to 6.

KRISTA Marie Dolendo of the University of San Agustin hits the dirt to save a ball. Her teamup with Nerissa Bautista won over the SWU pair of Hazel Pinero and Maritess Natad, 25-12. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

In women's play, University of San Agustin's Nerissa Bautista and Krista Marie Dolendo stunned Marites Natad and Hazel Piñeros of three-time defending champion SWU, 25-12.

Also posting early wins were University of Cebu over San Carlos, 25-16; University of Negros Occ. over University of Iloilo, 25-5; and St. La Salle over University of Southern Philippines, 26-24.



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

Nets blank Nash, Suns

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY—STEVE Nash, the NBA's reigning MVP, was held without a point for the first time this season as the New Jersey Nets crushed the Phoenix Suns, 110-72, on Monday.

Nenad Krstic had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Vince Carter chipped in with 20 points to help the streaking Nets win their ninth straight and bring them within two wins of a playoff spot.

The Nets will also clinch the Atlantic Division with five more wins.

"No one could have expected this," New Jersey coach Lawrence Frank told reporters after the game.

"It's definitely a credit to our team. The guys gave a great effort."

It was the largest margin of victory this season for the Nets, who led by as many as 44 at one point, as New Jersey's tenacious defense held the Suns to their lowest points total of the season.

Phoenix, which entered the game averaging 108.4 points, the highest in the NBA, and hadn't scored under 85 points this season, shot a franchise record-low 26.8 percent.

"I take full responsibility for hurting us tonight," Nash told reporters after the game.

"Give them credit. They were pretty stingy and outstanding defensively."

The Nets were coming off a big 79-74 win in Detroit on Sunday, handing the Pistons their third loss at home all season.

New Jersey pulled away in the second quarter, going on a 16-4 run at one point, to lead 50-31 at the half. The Nets then out-scored the Suns 33-14 to lead by 38 points after three quarters.

Despite the loss, Phoenix (47-22) still leads the Los Angeles Clippers by six games in the Pacific Division.

In Miami, Shaquille O'Neal scored 23 points and had 11 rebounds as the Heat beat the Indiana Pacers, 96-91.

Dwyane Wade scored 22 points for the Heat.

The Heat beat the Pacers for only the second time in the teams' last 16 regular-season meetings, doing so even after getting hit with five technical fouls and losing starting forward Udonis Haslem to an ejection in the second quarter after scuffling with Indiana's Jermaine O'Neal.

Stephen Jackson scored 22 points and Peja Stojakovic added 19 points for the Pacers.

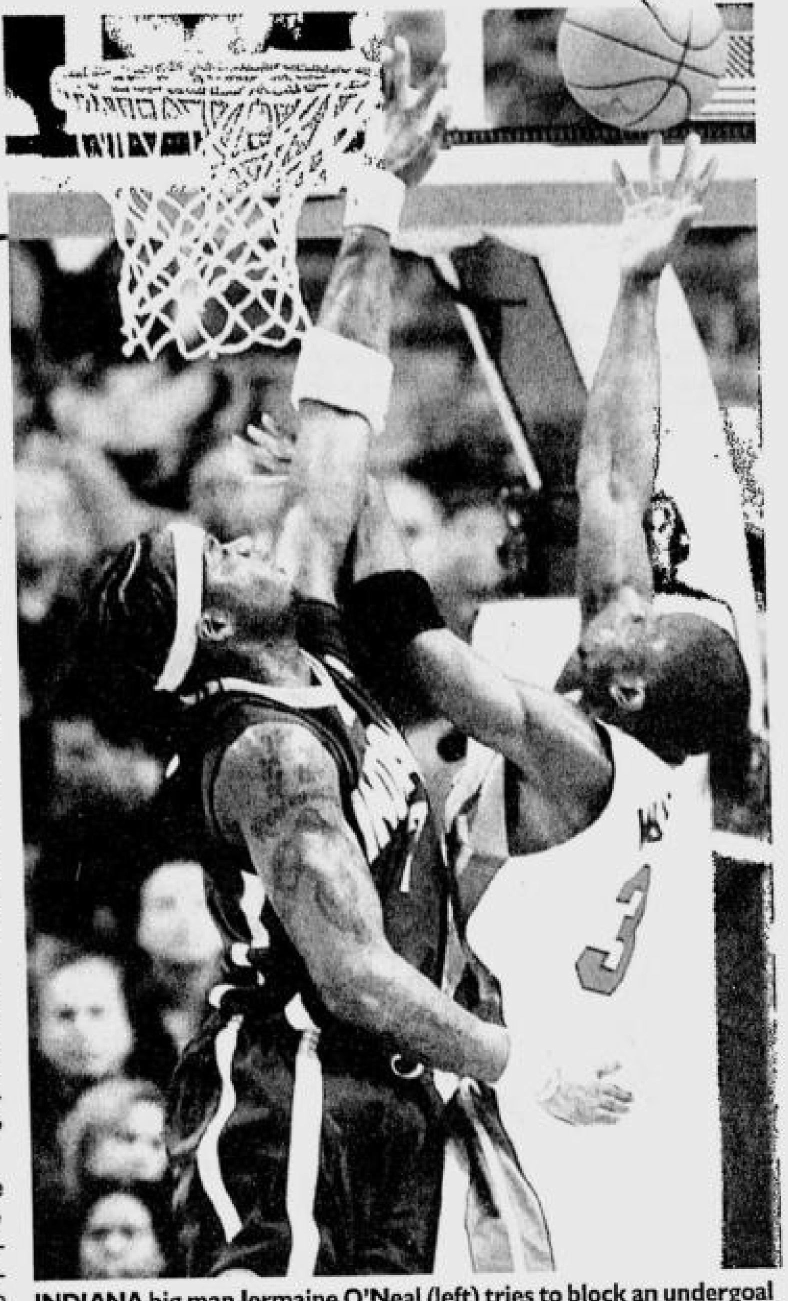
In Salt Lake City, Deron Williams scored 20 points as the Utah Jazz beat the New Orleans Hornets, 104-80.

In Oakland, California, Gilbert Arenas scored 40 points and Antawn Jamison added 31 as the former Warriors beat their old team, leading Washington over Golden State, 116-98. *Reuters, AP*

- **NBA on TV**

SOLAR SPORTS—Phoenix va Milwaukee (live at 9 a.m., replay on March 30, 5:30 p.m.)

SPORTS PLUS—San Antonio vs LA Clippers (live at 11:30 a.m., replay at 7 p.m.); Atlanta vs Charlotte (delayed telecast at 9:30 p.m., replay on March 30 at 2:30 p.m.)



INDIANA big man Jermaine O'Neal (left) tries to block an undergoal stab of Miami guard Dwyane Wade. AP

Thai Thongchai gets Masters invite

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA—THONGCHAI JAIDEE received a special invitation on Monday to play in the Masters, making him the first Thailand-born golfer to compete at this major in 35 years.

The cutoff for the criteria was the US PGA Tour money list and world ranking published after The Players Championship. Only two players were added who were not already eligible—Rory Sabbatini of South Africa and Arron Oberholser of the United States, both having won this year and finishing in the top 10 on the money list and top 50 in the rankings.

The Masters often invites a foreign player not already eligible. Thongchai finished among the top three on the Asian Tour money list for five straight years and was the first Thai to win a European tour event.

The 36-year-old Thongchai has won the Malaysian Open for the last two years. He will become the first Thai-born golfer at the Masters since Sukree Onsham in 1970-71.

Left out of the Masters was Camilo Villegas, a US tour rookie from Colombia who fell one birdie short at Sawgrass of getting into the top 10 on the money list; and JB Holmes, another tour rookie who won the FBR Open in February.

Tiger Woods is the defending champion. *AP*

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Roddick faces 'mysterious' foe

KEY BISCAYNE, FLORIDA—ANDY Roddick heads into the fourth round of the Nasdaq-100 Open with only sketchy information about his next opponent.

"I know what he looks like," Roddick said.

Qualifier Simon Greul is a 24-year-old German ranked 130th. He came to Key Biscayne with a career record of 1-5 on the ATP Tour. Unnerved playing on the stadium court Monday, he won a total of four points in the first set against Tim Henman.

But the upstart from Stuttgart rallied to beat Henman, 0-6, 6-1, 7-5, and he'll face Roddick on Tuesday.

"I'm going to ask around and try to get more of an in-depth scouting report," said Roddick, who dominated with his serve to beat 31st-seeded Fernando Verdasco, 6-3, 6-4.

Top-seeded Roger Federer improved to 24-1 this year by beating No. 27 Tommy Haas, 6-1, 6-3. Also advancing was No. 9 James Blake, who beat No. 23 Jarkko Nieminen, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1.

SHARAPOVA AFP

Four Russians are among the final eight: Maria Sharapova, Nadia Petrova, Anastasia Myskina and Svetlana Kuznetsova.

Sharapova overcame eight double faults to beat fellow Russian Maria Kirilenko, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1.

Elena Dementieva was upset by Tatiana Golovin, 6-2, 6-1. Top-seeded Amelie Mauresmo lost serve thrice but still beat Ana Ivanovic, 7-5, 6-2. *AP*

KTM riders dominate peewees, stay ahead

PROUDLY displaying their trophies after the event are KTM riders (from left) Raprap Enriquez who ruled the juniors division, and peewee class winners TJ Alberto, Jacob Orbe, Patrick Orbe, Joey Aycardo.

PUERTO PRINCESA, PALAWAN—The KTM-Access plus Samson team turned the recent third leg of the National Supercross Series here into its private playground to keep the lead in the peewee 9-under division.

Teammates Jacob Orbe, Joey Aycardo and TJ Alberto swept the podium to maintain the top three spots in the seven-leg tournament organized by National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Namssa).

Orbe, who also dominated the previous legs in Bacolod City and Iloilo City, stamped his class to whip a field of 15 riders.

Orbe tightened his grip on the overall lead with a 150-point aggregate thus far.

Aycardo and Alberto are currently in second and third places with 126 and 122 points, respectively.

"The boys really did well in the past legs, we are hoping they can sustain this winning streak until the end of the tournament," said KTM-Access plus Samson team manager Toti Alberto, a three-time national super bike champion.

Meanwhile, KTM bikers Patrick Orbe (65cc mini class), Moy-moy Flores (peewee 7-under) and Gensen Manuel (junior 85cc) ruled their respective classes during the event.

The KTM-Access plus Samson riders will also join the Juniors National on Apr. 9 in Pangasinan. This will serve as a tune up for the next leg of the national series scheduled in May.

SAMSUNG INTERCLUB

Superals lift Orchard to 5-shot lead

LIPA, BATANGAS—SIBLINGS CRYSTAL and Wolen Superal scored a 74 and 78, respectively, to power Orchard to an early five-stroke lead yesterday in Division I of the Jungolf Interclub 2006, the opening leg of the Samsung Summer Circuit, at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club here.

Counting also the 80 of Nico Sevilla, Orchard made 232 for the day and grabbed a five-shot advantage over the all-male Aguinaldo squad which posted a 237.

Gino Bunyi had a 77, Jobim Carlos tallied a 78 and Brent Sumampong rounded out scoring for the Aguinaldo bets with an 82.

Riviera Team 1 combined for 239 to stay third while Riviera Team 2 was running fourth at 244 in the tourney which has Samsung and Philippine Airlines as main sponsors.

The other sponsors are DHL, Callaway, Titleist, Mizuno, La Jolla, Taylor Made, Wilson, Ping, MCCI Air Liquid, Auto Magic, INQUIRER Golf and Michael Guy.

In Division II, Bino dela Paz (78), RJ Tallud (81) and Sunmi Hwang (91) conspired for 250 to edge ahead by one over Aguinaldo with Riviera not too far behind at 252.

JR Gonzales (78), Andie Unson (85) and JP de Claro (88) gave Aguinaldo a 251 total while Riviera drew scoring from Maan Legaspi (81), Tonton Arevalo (84) and Miggy Yee (87).

The rest of the standings saw Valley at 284, Wack Wack at 292, Royal Northwoods at 293 and Valley 2 at 296.

In the individual category, Lee Dong Jeun of Eagle Ridge and Crystal paced Class A, Nico Monsalve and Beverly Mendoza paced Class B, Bino dela Paz and Maan Legaspi were ahead in Class C and AR Ramos and Princess Superal showed the way in Class D.

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines is inviting interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **Supply and Delivery of One Hundred (100) units LAN Workstation for the New Integrated Deposit Servicing System (NIDSS) Project**

Project	Units	Approved Budget*	Cost of Bid Documents
Supply and Delivery of One Hundred (100) units LAN Workstation for the New Integrated Deposit Servicing System (NIDSS) Project	100	P6,000,000.00 Source of Fund: DBP Fund	P5,000.00

*Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening

Expected Date of Delivery: June 2006
Schedule of Activities:

Particulars	Date	Venue
Pre-Bidding Conference	April 17, 2006 (Monday) at 9:00 a.m.	6th Floor, DBP Building, Makati City
Submission of Eligibility Requirement Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals	"On or before" 9:00 a.m. of May 2, 2006 (Tuesday)	BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor DBP Building, Makati City
Opening of Eligibility Requirement Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals (Prospective Bidders are encouraged to attend this activity)	May 2, 2006 (Tuesday) at 9:30 a.m.	6th/Floor, DBP Building, Makati City

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest belonging to citizens of the Philippines and must have been authorized to engage in the **Supply and Delivery of LAN Workstation for at least three (3) years.** Only Bids from Bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall undergo the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification procedure.

Interested parties may download these forms at www.devbankphil.com.ph and at the Electronic Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management. Prospective bidders may secure the bid documents and Eligibility Requirement Forms from the BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor, DBP Building, Makati City, upon payment of a **non-refundable fee of Php 5,000.00**.

The Bank reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further inquiries, please call telephone numbers 8125702/8189511 loc. 2610

Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - March 29 & April 5, 2006)

LAURICE Guillen, Robbie Tan, Nes Jardin: "The talents are out there." BETOY JOHNSON

₱.5M or nothing

Cinemalaya officials and winners defend cash grant that critics deem 'too small'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THAT IS ALL WE CAN AFFORD RIGHT NOW," said Antonio "Tonyboy" Cojuangco, addressing critics of the P500,000 given in cash to feature film finalists in the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival.

The amount is too small, according to criticisms sent by e-mail to INQUIRER Entertainment.

Cojuangco—co-owner of the Philippine Multi-Media Systems Inc. (PMSI), a major sponsor of the festival—is peeved.

"What are these people doing to support young filmmakers?" he demanded. "They should put their money where their mouths are."

INQUIRER Entertainment asked Leo Quebral, one of said letter writers, for his affiliations but received no response.

Cinemalaya competition director Laurice Guillen explained: "The cash is a grant for the filmmakers, not payment for the outright sale of their work. The filmmakers retain proprietary rights to their films. It's just a subsidy; in return, Dream claims cable rights for the film for two years." That's Dream Satellite TV, operated by PMSI.

Two filmmakers from the first competition last year defended the festival.

Monster Jimenez, who co-wrote and co-directed "Big Time," one of the winning films (Best Screenplay and Best Sound), admitted that half a million was "too small." But, she said, "We understood that it was just a counterpart fund; meaning, we'd have to look for other sources to complete our budget."

The finalists receive the subsidy in tranches during production.

She said that that no other studio—"from Regal and Unitel to Viva and Star Cinema"—could offer the same deal: "We were given P500,000 and yet we still own the film!"

Emmanuel de la Cruz, who wrote and directed "Sarong Banggi," another finalist, agreed: "It was sizable enough to help the filmmaker get started."

Dennis Marasigan, Cultural Center of the Philippines (another major sponsor) assistant vice president for marketing, denied Quebada's allegation that the CCP owns Cinemalaya films in perpetuity.

"We are allowed to show the films 'in perpetuity' only within CCP venues, according to the provisions in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Cinemalaya and the filmmakers," said Marasigan.

He added that, in last year's festival, an entire session was devoted to fine-tuning the MOA. "The filmmakers were encouraged to ask questions and make recommendations to safeguard their interests."

De la Cruz recalled, "We went through the contract, paragraph by paragraph."

The same procedure was followed this year, said Marasigan.

"I think we've been very flexible because we really want to support new filmmakers," Guillen stressed.

Cojuangco reiterated, "It was never our intention to make money [with this project]. Our only goals were to create awareness about first-time filmmakers and provide an outlet for them at the same time."

Added Nes Jardin, CCP president: "The talents are there; there are limitless materials to draw from; and new technologies offer boundless opportunities for new creations."

"But the audience should also help," said Robbie Tan, chair of Cinemalaya's monitoring committee. "People always complain that we lack good local films. That's why the audience should support these movies to send a signal to producers that they should make more quality films."

OPENING TODAY

Moments of Love

Stars Dingdong Dantes, Iza Calzado, Karylle

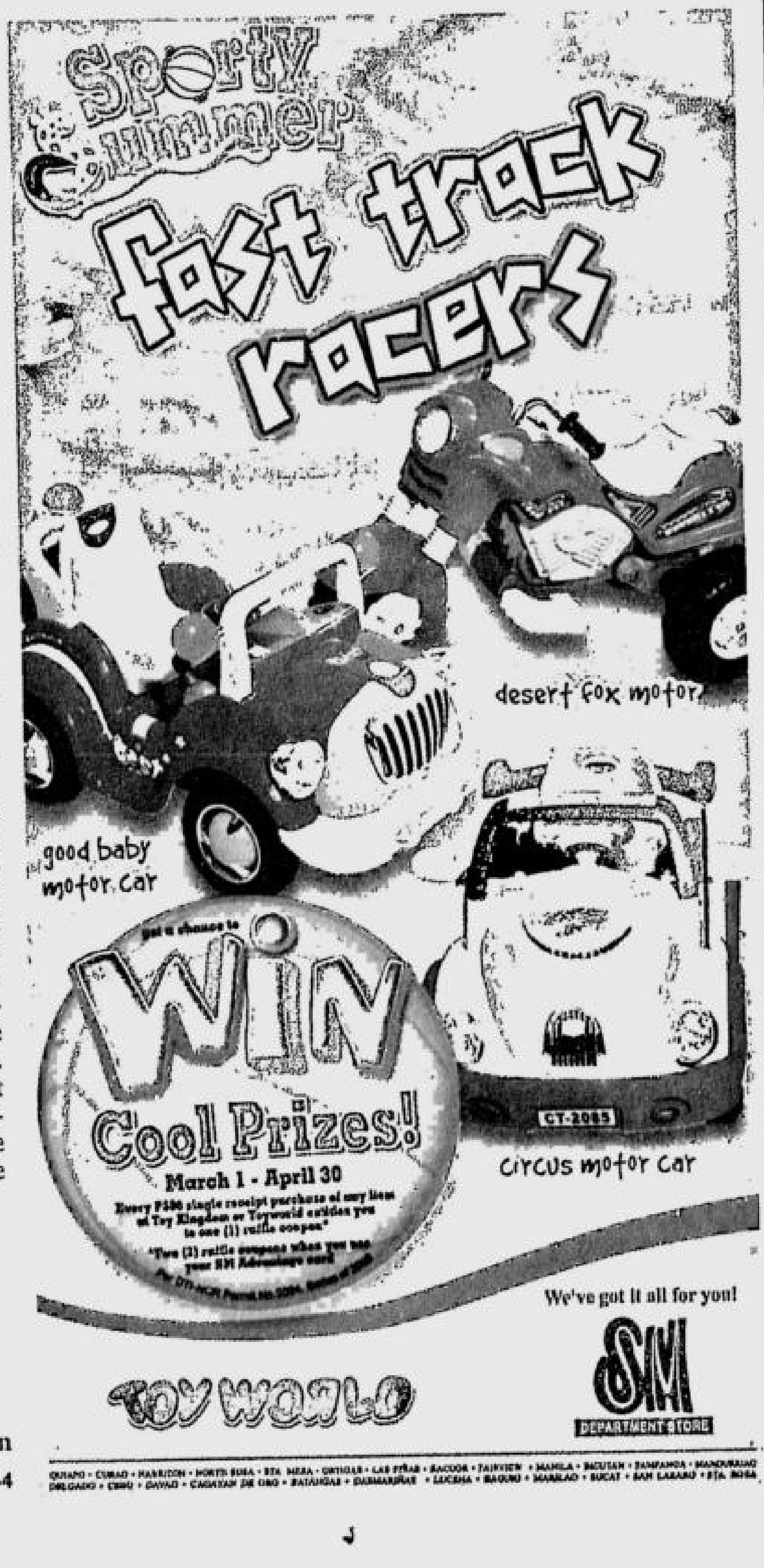
Directed by Mark A. Reyes V

Star-crossed lovers (Calzado and Dantes)) are not living in the same decade. She is stuck in the 1950s; he's in the here and now. Strangely, they manage to communicate through a telephone. GMA Films president Annette Gozon-Abrogar promises, "The ending will make the audience weep."

Basic Instinct 2: Risk Addiction

Stars Sharon

OPENING/ A2-4



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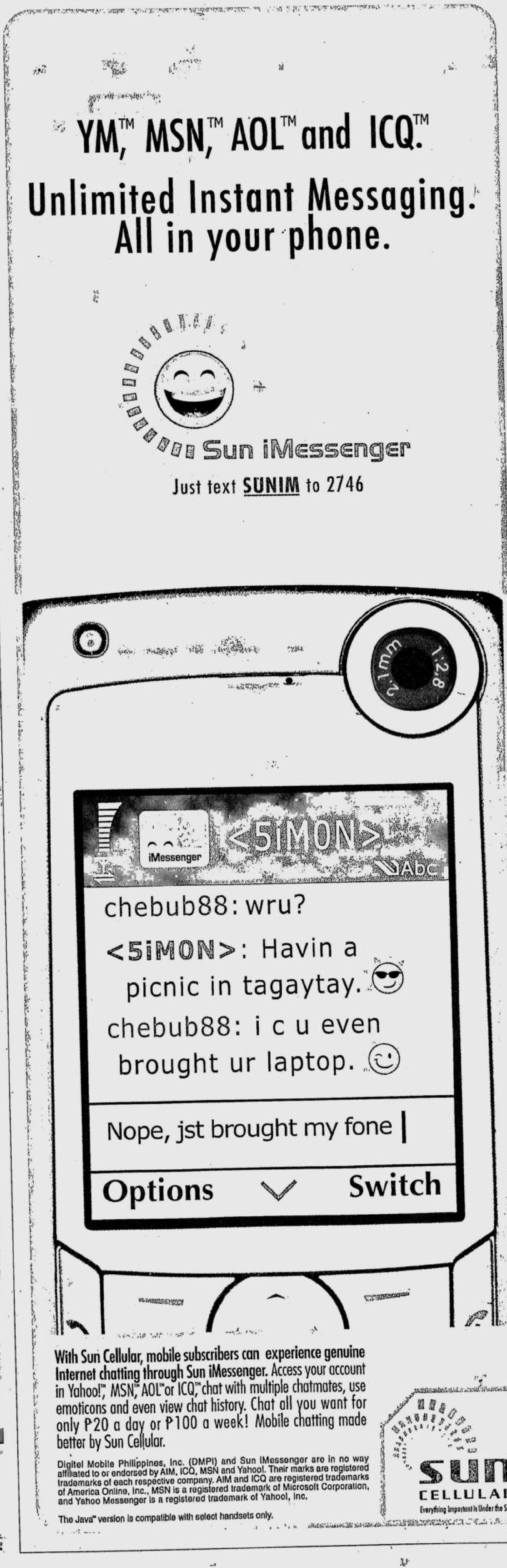

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RUSHES

Plinky in a world turned upside down

TV PERSONALITY AND FITNESS EXPERT **Plinky Recto**, who accused her former boyfriend of kidnapping their one-year-old son, told INQUIRER Entertainment that the last time she was with the child was three weeks ago, in Negros Occidental.

"I flew all the way there for the hearing. I really missed him. I played with him before and after the court procedures," the controversial TV celebrity said in a phone interview on Monday.

The hearing was for the physical injuries and assault case that the ex-boyfriend had filed against Plinky before a court in said province.

Earlier, in January, Plinky claimed that her former partner, a wealthy Negrense lawyer, forcibly took their son from her home in San Juan, while she was out in a meeting in Quezon City. Plinky filed a kidnapping case before the Mandaluyong City Regional Trial Court.

Plinky said the Mandaluyong RTC has requested her not to make any statements to the media about the status of the case.

As for that hearing in Negros Occidental, Plinky could not help recounting: "He set up a buffet table inside the courthouse for all the staff members."

PLINKY Recto
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Scrimping

Show biz talk program "S-Files" is reportedly scrimping on the talent fees of its hosts. Apart from main anchors, **Paolo Bediones, Pia Guanio, Joey Marquez** and **Richard Gomez**, the show has taken on newbie **Princess Violago** to replace the four "Show Biz Helleour" segment hosts **IC Mendoza, Alessandra da Rossi, Jeremy Marquez** and **Teri Onor**.

PIM turnover

Instead of flying to Southern Leyte for the turnover of funds collected from the highly successful "Celebrity Tiangge for Leyte" in Taguig City, organizer **Ruffa Gutierrez** announced that the money will be given today to the United Children's Fund (Unicef) in Makati City, and the Philippine National Red Cross in Intramuros.

PRINCESS Violago
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

RUFFA Gutierrez
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'When I'm 61 . . .'

After incessant declarations that she's only 46 years old, fortuneteller-slash-scandal magnet **Madame Auring** finally admitted on the Sunday night gab fest "Sharon," that she's 61 years old, but in a roundabout way.

"I'm 16," she fearlessly told the flabbergasted host, **Sharon Cuneta**. "But in reverse," Madame added.

"By the way, her eldest is 40 years old," fellow guest **Mystica** interjected.

"I had her when I was sixteen," Madame Auring insisted on national TV.

When Cuneta asked Mystica if she had ever undergone plastic surgery, Mystica unleashed another quotable quote. "These are real," she said, describing her ample bosom. "Really expensive."

Search for Zsa Zsa Z

The movie version of "Zsa Zsa Zaturnnah," the comic book, was reportedly acquired by Regal—and **Mark Meily** has been tapped to direct it. According to the grapevine, the lead role, which was played by **Eula Valdez** onstage, is a toss-up between "Ako Legal Wife" co-stars **Zsa Zsa Padilla** and **Rufa Mae Quinto**.

Quinto supposedly has the edge because she also played a campy superheroine in Viva's "Super B."

So how is this going to be decided? With a tape measure?

ZSA ZSA Padilla
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

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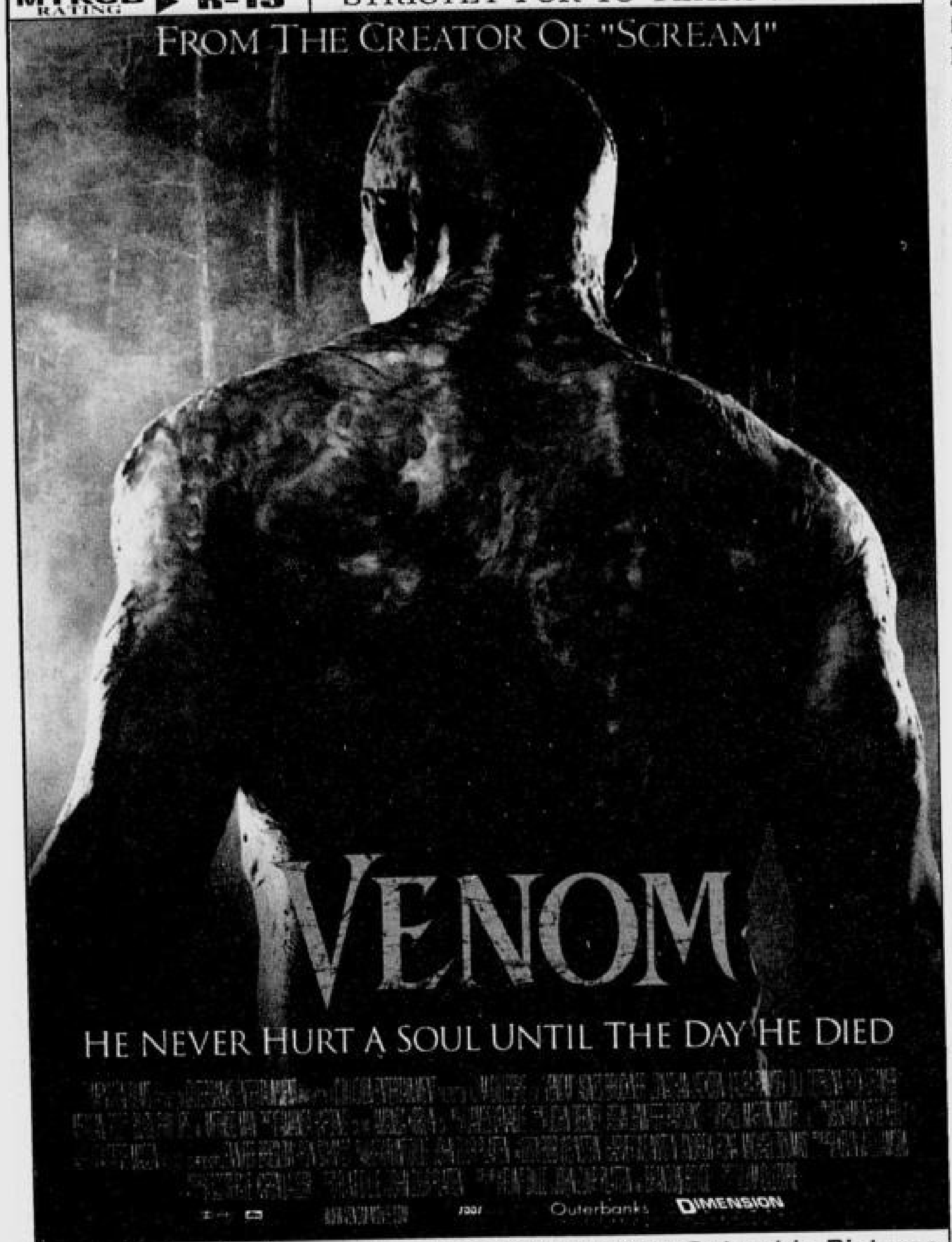
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For inquiries, call:
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GUARANTEED SEATS
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1	BASIC INSTINCT 2	12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30, 11:00	R-18
2	ICE AGE 2	1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:30	G
3	ICE AGE 2	12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00	G
4	VENOM	2:15, 4:25, 6:35, 8:45, 11:00	R-13

glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN CENTER AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! Ayala Malls Lovemalls

AT THE CINEMAS
THX
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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 ULTRAVIOLET	2 MOMENTS OF LOVE	3 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	4 BASIC INSTINCT 2
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 VENOM	2 JUST FRIENDS	3 THX BASIC INSTINCT 2 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 RENT	5 NANNY MCPHEE	6 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	7 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 JUST FRIENDS	2 BASIC INSTINCT 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX JUST FRIENDS GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 RENT GUARANTEED SEATS	4 ULTRAVIOLET GUARANTEED SEATS	5 BASIC INSTINCT 2 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		
	3 JUST FRIENDS	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE	5 VENOM	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 BASIC INSTINCT 2	3 VENOM	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 MOMENTS OF LOVE	2 VENOM		
	3 JUST FRIENDS	4 BASIC INSTINCT 2	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	

At the Activity Center

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
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Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

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Child Development Center of Cebu's Culminating Activities March 30, 2006	Levi's Engineered Freedom Park April 1 & 2, 2006

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MARCH 31
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APRIL 1
NYOY VOLANTE
APRIL 7
BAMBOO
APRIL 8
SPONGECOLA

glorietta
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ROUNDUP

Top 10 films

LOS ANGELES—Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc., official trackers: 1) "Inside Man," $29M; 2) "V for Vendetta," $12.3M; 3.) "Stay Alive," $11.2M; 4) "Failure to Launch," $10.8M; 5) "The Shaggy Dog," $9.1M; 6) "She's the Man," $7.4M; 7. "Larry the Cable Guy: Health Inspector," $7.05M; 8. "The Hills Have Eyes," $4.25M; 9) "Eight Below," $2.7M; 10) "16 Blocks," $2.2M. *AP*

JET LI

Jet Li sued

BEIJING—Action star Jet Li has been sued for his new movie about a late Chinese kung fu master, whose relatives say it dishonors and misrepresents his life, the official Xinhua News Agency said Sunday.

Li's name has been added to a March 7 lawsuit against producers and distributors of "Fearless" filed by Huo Yuanjia's grandson, who does not want the movie to be released worldwide, Xinhua said.

Huo Shoujin also wants the film to be pulled from theaters in Asia and is demanding a public apology. *AP*

In the flesh

NEW YORK—Ever wonder what Bart Simpson would look like in human form?

The long-running animated Fox series "The Simpsons" was set to unveil a live-action opening sequence last Sunday. In it, the dysfunctional cartoon family—Bart, Homer, Marge, Lisa and Maggie—will be seen as they would appear in real life, played by lookalike actors.

"I'm just amazed there are people who want to be known for looking like the Simpsons," said Al Jean, the show's executive producer, in a statement. *AP*

FRED SAVAGE

Wonder dad

LOS ANGELES—Actor Fred Savage, best known as the kid star on ABC-TV's "The Wonder Years," is going to be a father.

He and wife Jennifer are expecting their first child in August, Fred's agent Brian Swardstrom confirmed.

Savage, 29, starred as wide-eyed Kevin Arnold, growing up amid '60s morals and mores on the ABC series from 1988-93.

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movietime FRESH NEW MOVIES

1. JUST FRIENDS
2. MOMENTS OF LOVE
3. VENOM

1
2
3
friends
VENOM

METRO MANILA

THE PODIUM

ICE AGE 2
12:15 FS / 12:40 MF / 02:45
04:50 / 06:55 / 08:30 LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:30 END

JUST FRIENDS
02:15 FS / 02:45 MF / 04:50
06:55 / 8:30LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:35 END

SM MEGACINEMA

1 ICE AGE 2
11:20FS / 11:50 MF / 01:55
04:00 / 06:05 / 07:40 LFS
08:10 LMF / 09:40 END
2 JUST FRIENDS
3 ICE AGE 2
4 RESERVED
5 NANNY McPHEE
6 SHE'S THE MAN
7 V FOR VENDETTA
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3
9 MOMENTS OF LOVE
10 ULTRAVIOLET
11 MOMENTS OF LOVE
12

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 V FOR VENDETTA
3 MOMENTS OF LOVEZ
4 RESERVED
5 JUST FRIENDS
6 VENOM
7 ICE AGE 2
8 SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY DASMARINAS

1 ICE AGE
2 VENOM
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

1 THE DARK
2 NANNY McPHEE
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 ULTRAVIOLET
5 JUST FRIENDS
6 ICE AGE
7 VENOM
8 MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 ICE AGE 2
10 FINAL DESTINATION 3
11 SHAGGY DOG
12 SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY STA. MESA

1 ICE AGE 2
2 ICE AGE 2
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 SHAGGY DOG
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 V FOR VENDETTA
7 NANNY McPHEE
8 VENOM
9 JUST FRIENDS
10 SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY BICUTAN

1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 VENOM
4 ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY SAN LAZARO

1 VENOM
2 ICE AGE 2
3 ICE AGE 2
4 ULTRAVIOLET
5 JUST FRIENDS
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MANILA

1 ICE AGE 2
2 VENOM
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 NANNY McPHEE
6 ULTRAVIOLET
7 MOMENTS OF LOVE
8 THE DARK
9 FEARLESS
10 FINAL DESTINATION 3
11 JUST FRIENDS
12 ICE AGE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL

1 ICE AGE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 JUST FRIENDS
7 FINAL DESTINATION 3
8 V FOR VENDETTA
9 ULTRAVIOLET

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA

1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM

SM CITY SUCAT

1 ICE AGE 2
2 VENOM
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ULTRAVIOLET

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SM CITY BAGUIO

1 VENOM
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY MARILAO

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3

SM CITY BATANGAS

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 16 BLOCKS

SM CITY BACOOR

1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 SHAGGY DOG
3 ICE AGE 2
4 NANNY McPHEE
5 VENOM
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE
7 FINAL DESTINATION 3
8 SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY STA. ROSA

1 SHE'S THE MAN
2 VENOM
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE

SM CITY PAMPANGA

1 VENO
2 ICE AGE 2
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 HOUSE OF FURY
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY LUCENA

1 ICE AGE 2
2 16 BLOCKS
3 THE DARK
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MOLINO

1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 NANNY McPHEE
4 ULTRAVIOLET

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU

1 RESERVED
2 VENOM
11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:10
02:50 / 04:30 / 06:10
07:50 / 09:15 LFS
09:30 LMF / 10:55 END
3 ICE AGE 2
11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:30
03:30 / 05:30 / 09:05 LFS
09:30 LMF / 11:05 END
4 SYRIANA
5 CASANOVA
6 BREAKING NEWS
7 MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY ILOILO

1
2 RESERVED
3 ICE AGE 2
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 SHAGGY DOG
7 RESERVED
8 V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY DAVAO

1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
2 NEW WORLD
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 HOUSE OF FURY
5 VENOM
6 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN

1 VENOM
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 ICE AGE 2 • THX
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 LUCKY SLEVEN
4 VENOM
5 ICE AGE 2
6 BASIC INSTINCT 2
7 JUST FRIENDS
8 SHE'S THE MAN
9 ULTRAVIOLET
10 NANNY MCPHEE

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ICE AGE 2
2 NANNY MCPHEE
ULTRAVIOLET
3 LUCKY SLEVEN
4 JUST FRIENDS
5 VENOM
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE
7 BASIC INSTINCT 2

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 JUST FRIENDS
2 LUCKY SLEVEN
3 ICE AGE 2
4 BASIC INSTINCT 2
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 VENOM
7 NANNY MCPHEE
8 SHE'S THE MAN

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 VENOM
5 LUCKY SLEVEN
6 JUST FRIENDS

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 ICE AGE 2
3 VENOM
4 LUCKY SLEVEN

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1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 VENOM
3 ICE AGE 2
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

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1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 GLORY ROAD
4 16 BLOCKS

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 VENOM
4 HOUSE OF FURY
5 ULTRAVIOLET

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 VENOM
2 ICE AGE 2
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 VENOM
4 ULTRAVIOLET

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 VENOM
4 LAST HOLIDAY
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 HOUSE OF FURY

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 GLORY ROAD
5 SYRIANA
6 THE DARK

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 ICE AGE 2
2 GLORY ROAD
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

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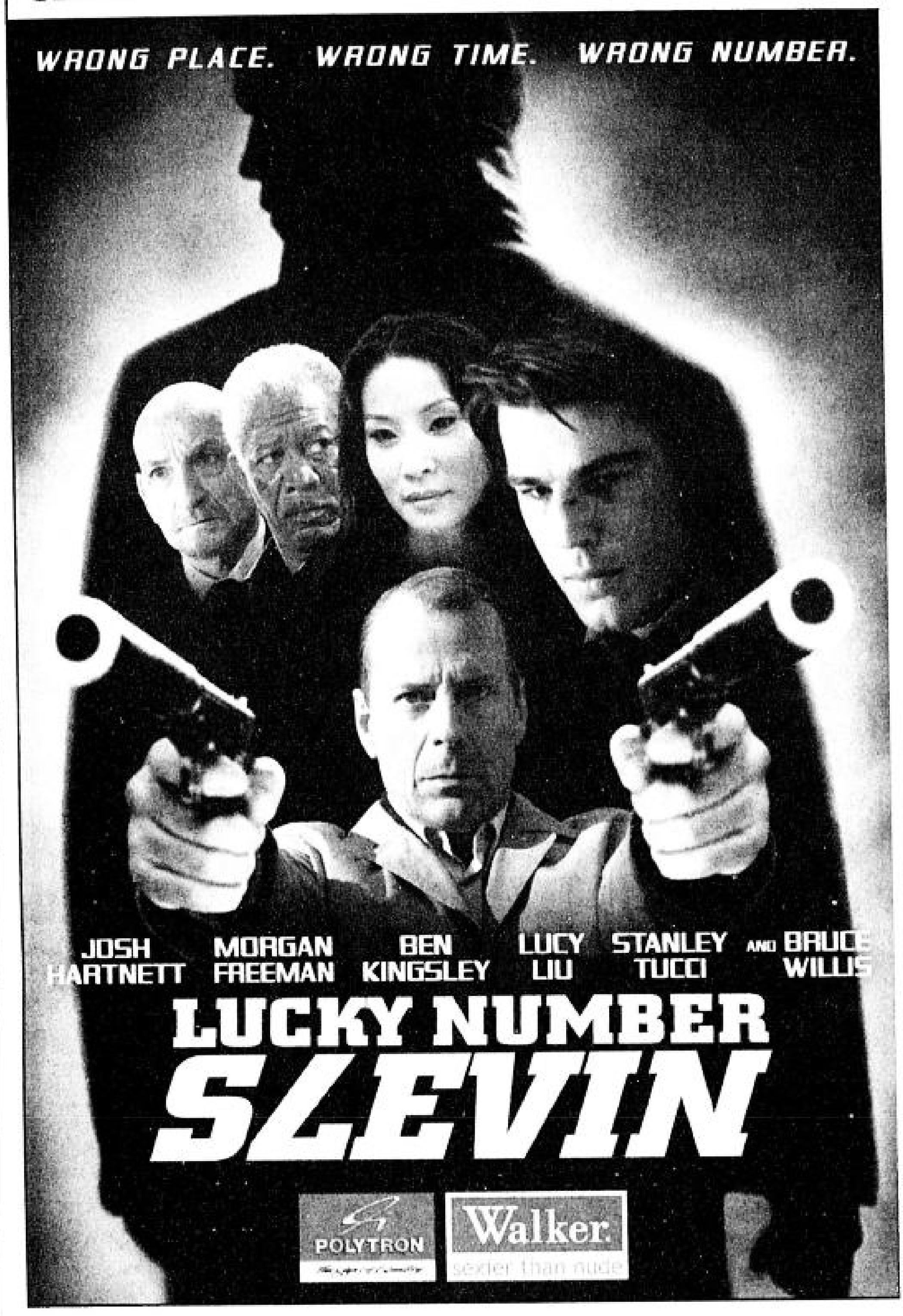

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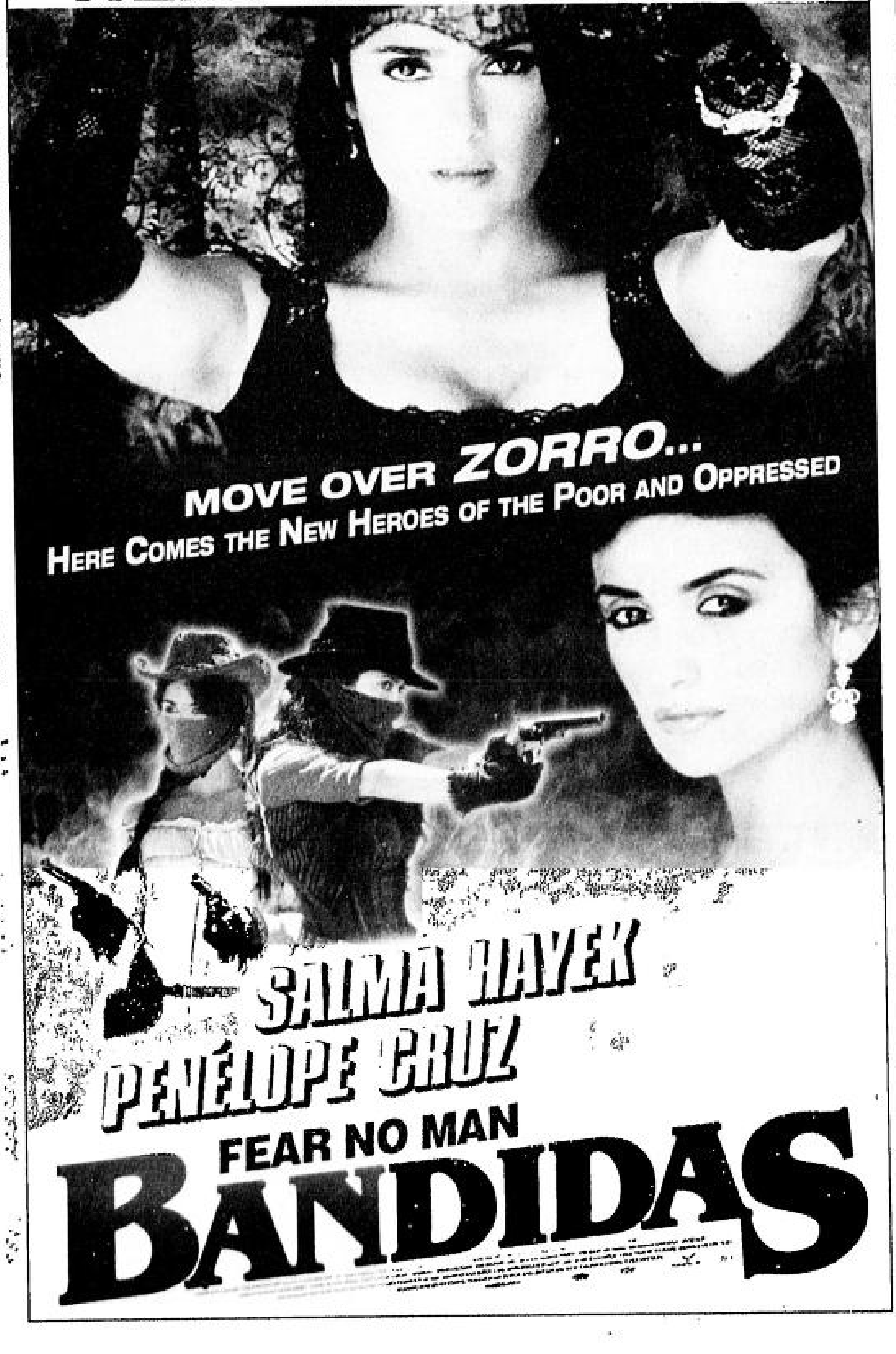

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MOVIE GUIDE

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2 (DOLBY) VENOM R13
3 (DOLBY) NANNY MCPHEE GP
4 (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT 2 R18
PREMIERE'
(DOLBY) ICE AGE 2 GP

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(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) SHAGGY DOG
2 (SDDS) FINAL DESTINATION
3 (DTS) SHE'S THE MAN
4 GOLD (DTS) V FOR VENDETTA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) NANNY MCPHEE
6 GOLD (SDDS) ULTRAVIOLET
7 GOLD (DOLBY) GLORY ROAD
8 (DOLBY STEREO) HOSTEL
9 (DOLBY STEREO) NORTH COUNTRY
10 (DOLBY STEREO) 16 BLOCKS

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1 (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 (DOLBY) VENOM

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 CASANOVA
2 (DTS) BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS
4 ST. ANGIE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 16 BLOCKS
2 (DOLBY) BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3 (DTS) CASANOVA
4 ST. ANGIE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 FEARLESS
2 DATE MOVIE
3 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 DATE MOVIE
2 THE DESCENT
3 (DOLBY) CASANOVA
4 (DTS) AEON FLUX

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 SHAGGY DOG
3 (DOLBY) SAW-2

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 16 BLOCKS
2 DATE MOVIE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 NANNY MCPHEE
3 GLORY ROAD
4 ULTRAVIOLET

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) GLORY ROAD
2 (DOLBY) NANNY MCPHEE
3 (DOLBY) ULTRAVIOLET
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) GLORY ROAD
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 NORTH COUNTRY
4 NANNY MCPHEE
5 V FOR VENDETTA

starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 BASIC INSTINCT 1
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) SOON TO OPEN
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 HOSTEL
2 NEW BLOOD
3 BREAKING NEWS
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 V FOR VENDETTA
3 HOUSE OF FURY

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 BASIC INSTINCT 1
3 VENOM
4 ICE AGE 2

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 SHAGGY DOG
2 DATE MOVIE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) 16 BLOCKS
2 CASANOVA
3 (DTS ES) FINAL DESTINATION
4 V FOR VENDETTA

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 HOSTEL
2 PIRANHA-3

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) FINAL DESTINATION -2
2 SANDAKOT NA KALIGAYAHAN
3 RED ROSES
4 (DTS) SNEAK CHARMER

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS
2 BIGAY HILIG
3 (DTS) BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4 ST. ANGIE
5 CASANOVA

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 16 BLOCKS
2 DATE MOVIE
3 FEARLESS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DOLBY) RESERVED
4 (DTS) RESERVED

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 UNANG TIKIM
2 CASANOVA
3 DATE MOVIE
4 SHAGGY DOG

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-6271
1 AEON FLUX
2 DATE MOVIE
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 16 BLOCKS
2 DATE MOVIE
3 (DOLBY) FEARLESS
4 THE DARK D/W HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 CHECK IN

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
2 FEARLESS

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

From page A2-1

Stone, Charlotte Rampling, David Morrissey

Directed by Michael Caton-Jones

In this sequel to the erotic thriller, icepick-wielding novelist Catherine Tramell (Stone) relocates to London and gets in trouble with cops as a result of the sudden death of a sports star. She is evaluated by a psychologist (Morrissey) assigned by the Scotland Yard. Naturally, the shrink falls under the blonde seductress' spell. Joshua Tyler of Cinemablend.com disagrees: "['Basic Instinct'] didn't need a sequel a decade ago and it certainly doesn't need one now ....[Stone is] 10 years past her nudity expiration date."

Ice Age 2: The Meltdown

Voiced by Ray Romano, Queen Latifah, John Leguizamo, Denis Leary

Directed by Carlos Saldanha

Another sequel, this one for the kinder crowd. As the Ice Age draws to a close, our animal-heroes are panicking because a glacial dam is about to burst, threatening to flood the whole valley. As such, mammoth, sloth and saber-toothed tiger must work as a team and embark on a journey of survival. Scott Weinberg of Rotten Tomatoes.com says: "The plot is not all that important but ... expect the kids to deliver some huge box-office coin for this one."

Venom

Stars Agnes Bruckner, Bijou Philips, Jonathan Jackson

Directed by Jim Gillespie

Teeners must escape from a "snake-powered bogeyman" spawned in the swamps of Louisiana. Bob Longino of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution describes it as "a serviceable, if completely humorless meat grinder." Anita Gates of the New York Times comments: "[It] can't be called a good movie, but within its genre, it's perfectly palatable."

Rent

Stars Rosario Dawson, Idina Menzel, Taye Diggs

Directed by Chris Columbus

The struggles of hungry young artists are set to music in the movie version of a Broadway hit. The much-awaited (if much-delayed) film adaptation helmed by Columbus has been greeted by mixed reviews, though. Melinda Ennis of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution raves, "[The] rock musical brings new magic to the urban scene." Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times differs: "On film, 'Rent' is the sound of one hand clapping." Exclusively at Ayala Malls Cinemas.

Lucky Number Slevin

Stars Josh Hartnett, Morgan Freeman, Ben Kingsley, Lucy Liu, Bruce Willis

Directed by Paul McGuigan

Mistaken for another man, Slevin (Hartnett) gets entangled in a web of violence woven by two warring crime lords (Kingsley and Freeman). A hit man (Willis) joins in the mad chase. Justin Chang of Variety deems the film "thoroughly—and sometimes justifiably—infatuated with its own cleverness." Kirk Honeycutt of The Hollywood Reporter commends it for being "a fast-paced, funny riff on film noir ... [but] it might be too slick and clever for its own good."

OPENING TODAY

Just Friends

Stars Ryan Reynolds, Amy Smart, Chris Klein

Directed by Roger Kumble

A playboy revisits his hometown to woo the girl that got away. Sue Pierman of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel thinks that the director "provides speed, not substance ... [but] there are moments of guilty-pleasure hilarity." Ty Burr of the Boston Globe raves, "It's crass, unsophisticated ... so sue me, I laughed. A lot."

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② VENOM
MTRCB: R-13
1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00 LMF

③ NANNY MCPHEE
MTRCB: GP

④ BASIC INSTINCT 2
MTRCB: R-18
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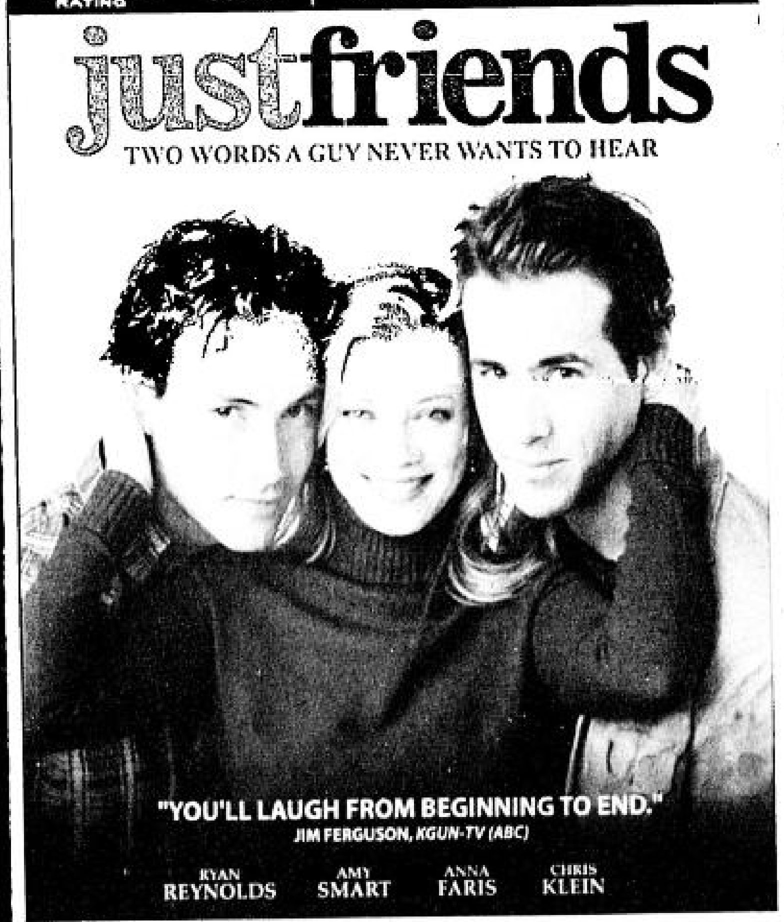
just friends
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JIM FERGUSON, KGUN-TV (ABC)
RYAN REYNOLDS
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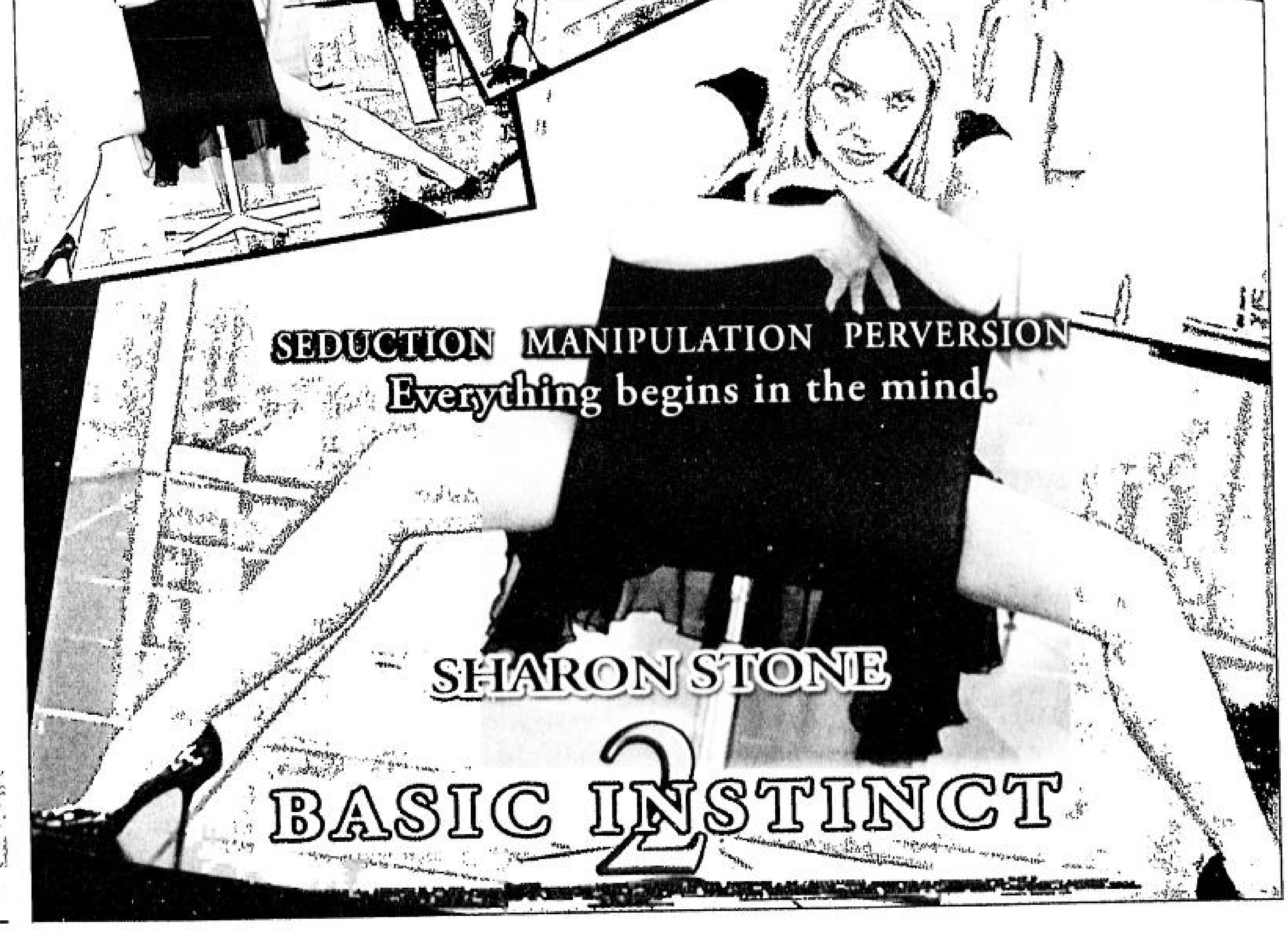
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SHARON STONE
BASIC INSTINCT 2

Hallmark, HBO woo Pinoys

"EMPIRE"—Hallmark's answer to HBO's "Rome"?

HBO AND HALLMARK ARE IN A RATings race to win Asia. Top executives of the two movie channels were in Manila recently to announce their latest products.

Andrew Hanna, managing director for Asia-Pacific or Sparrowhawk Media Group (which acquired Hallmark Channel international operations in 2004), said, "This year [for us], it is all about quality drama entertainment."

The lineup of original productions for 2006 includes two best-selling novels adapted to the small screen—"Poseidon Adventure" and "Mysterious Island."

Three other feature films are debuting in the next few months: "Hercules," "Empire" and the futuristic "Supernova."

As for the signature Hallmark drama, there's "Thicker than Water" and "Mom at Sixteen."

Holiday titles are "Back to You and Me" and "Ordinary Miracles."

Hanna also announced that Hallmark has opened an office in Singapore "to concentrate on marketing and communicating with our audience in Southeast Asia."

"LEGENDS of the Fall" is one of HBO's blockbusters.

According to Hanna, Hallmark is seen in more than 20 million households in the region. Globally, Hallmark channels broadcast in 120 countries to over 110 million subscribers.

Scheduling

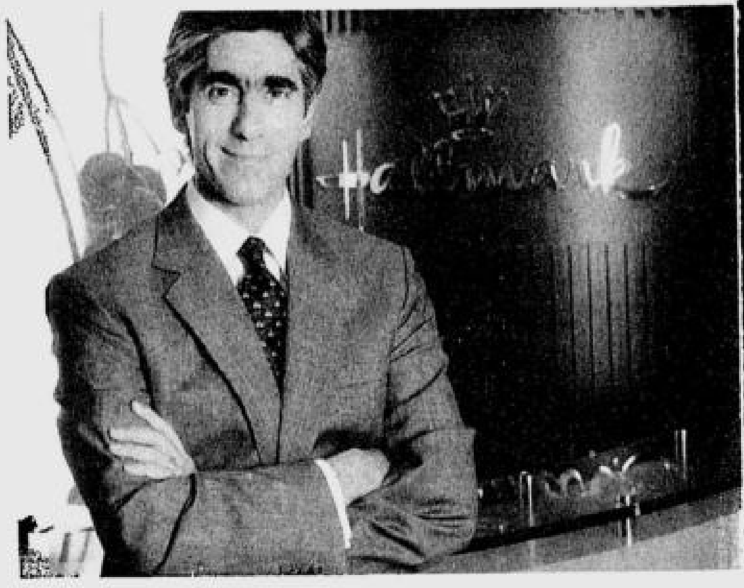
HBO goes a step further than producing originals. Caroline Wong, marketing communications director of HBO Asia, introduced the HBO Pak, "three new, 24-hour, commercial-free premium blockbuster movie channels" that will be available in the Philippines starting in April

Wong explained: "These are not individual channels—they are bundled within the Pak of five, including Cinemax." The three new channels are HBO Signature, HBO Family and HBO Hits.

"With these five," Wong said, "we offer subscribers more premium programming, added value and greater viewing choice."

HBO Signature promises the latest movies and series, including the channel's original productions. HBO Family is "completely dedicated to family-oriented blockbusters." HBO Hits is the most interesting, as it pioneers what Wong described as "cascading" slate.

She explained: "Seven brand-new blockbusters encore throughout the whole week on a rotating schedule, so that if the busy viewer misses the 2 p.m. Wednesday screening, for instance, he can catch it on Saturday, 10 p.m."



ANDREW Hanna: "All about quality."

HBO Signature has a viewer-friendly aspect as well. It introduces Event of the Month, which will showcase an exclusive series scheduled over consecutive nights all the way to its conclusion. Think a whole season of "Six Feet Under" screened in two weeks.

"Ask you cable service providers," Wong said.

Boob tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: WHAT IS YOUR WORKING RELAtionship with your wife in your office?

Guest: She really runs the office! After all, as the saying goes, for every man there is behind a woman!

(At least, he didn't say a woman's behind!)

* * *

Host Who are the major sponsors of your group's fundraising campaign?

Guest: We have many popular people, but the rich they want to be unknown.

(*Ano daw?*)

* * *

Host: What about the issue of electoral reforms, does it concern you?

Guest: Oh, yes, I'm very disconcerned of this.

(*Isa ka pa!*)

* * *

Host: So, should the polls be automated? And how should it be done?

Guest: Definitely, it should be. We need to fax-track the process!

(So, buy those fax machines, quick!)

* * *

Host: How can we speedily solve this case?

Guest: The public has to cooperate and report tips to the police. For this, *handa akong magbigay ng pabuya sa* suspect.

(Hey, whose side are you on?)

* * *

Host: How was your fishing trip last weekend, did you catch a lot of fish?

Guest: Not really—*masyadong mabilis tumakbo yung isda.*

(Must have been a coelacanth...)

* * *

Host: How will you get all of the bickering parties to agree to take a common stand?

Guest: All conflicting views can be resolved if we have a round discussion.

(A round discussion? What happened to the table?)

* * *

Host: How can we make sure that our hearts are healthy?

Guest: If you follow the advice of experts, there are many tips you can do to provide you with a long and healthy heart!

(We don't really want a long heart, just a healthy one!)

* * *

Host: How will you counter all of the charges raised by your rival against you?

Guest: I will file and sue my own case against him!

(File and sue? File a suit? —Whatever...)

* * *

Host: Many people want you to get married. What's taking you so long?

Guest: Because we don't really need it. *Wala kaming papel, pero kung* legality *sa puso, kasal kami!*

(Quote, unquote!)

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JUST FRIENDS 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40 / 6:50 / 9:00	VENOM 1:40 / 3:40 / 5:40 / 7:40 / 9:40	ICE AGE 2 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40 / 6:50 / 9:00 HOSTEL 7:35 / 9:40	ICE AGE 2 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
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1 MOMENTS OF LOVE 12:00 R3 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40	2 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN 12:00 R3 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40	3 BASIC INSTINCT 2 12:45 / 3:25 / 6:05 / 8:45
4 ICE AGE 2 12:15 R4 / 1:05 / 3:15 / 5:25 / 7:35	5 VENOM 12:40 / 2:40 / 4:40 / 6:40 / 8:40	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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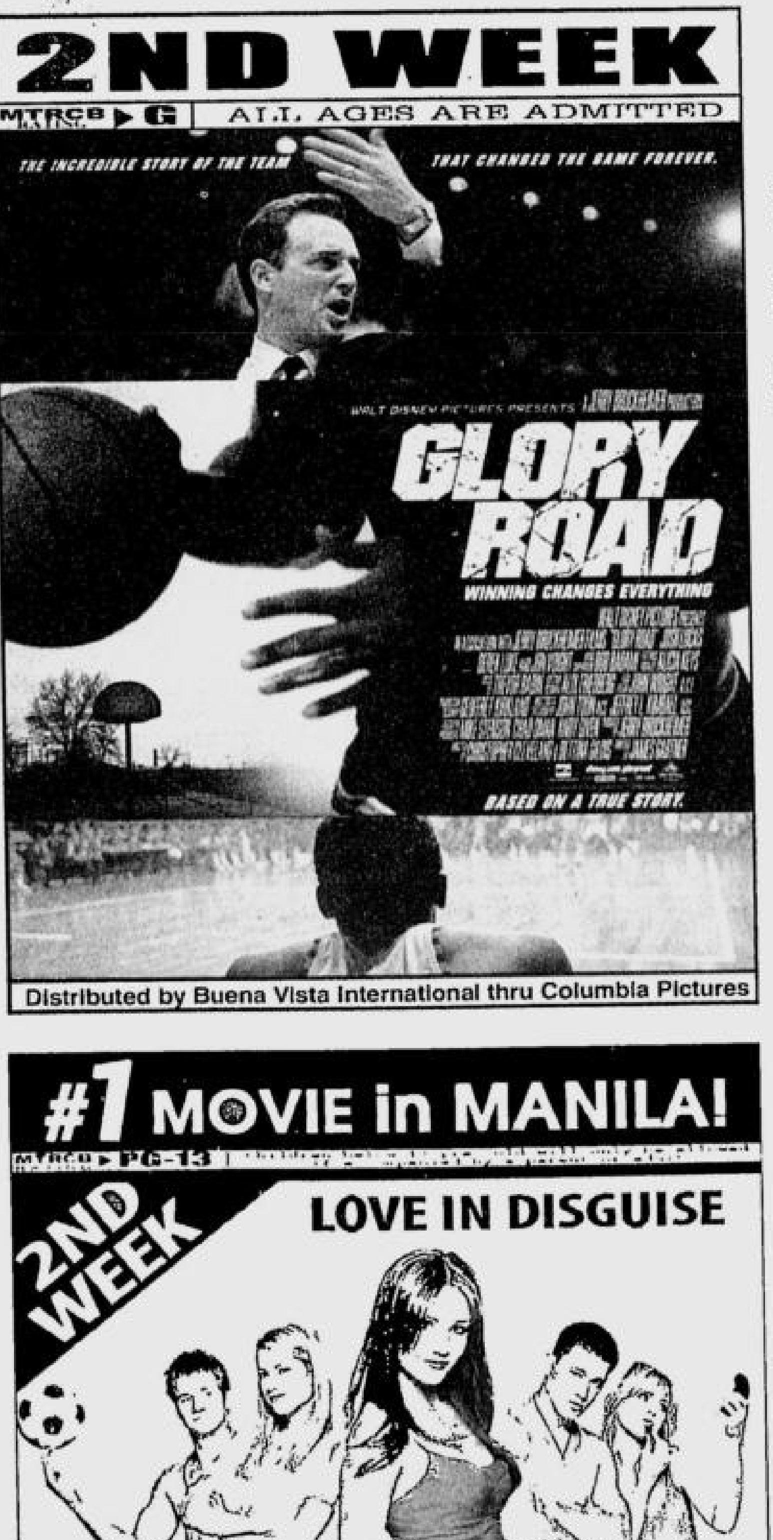
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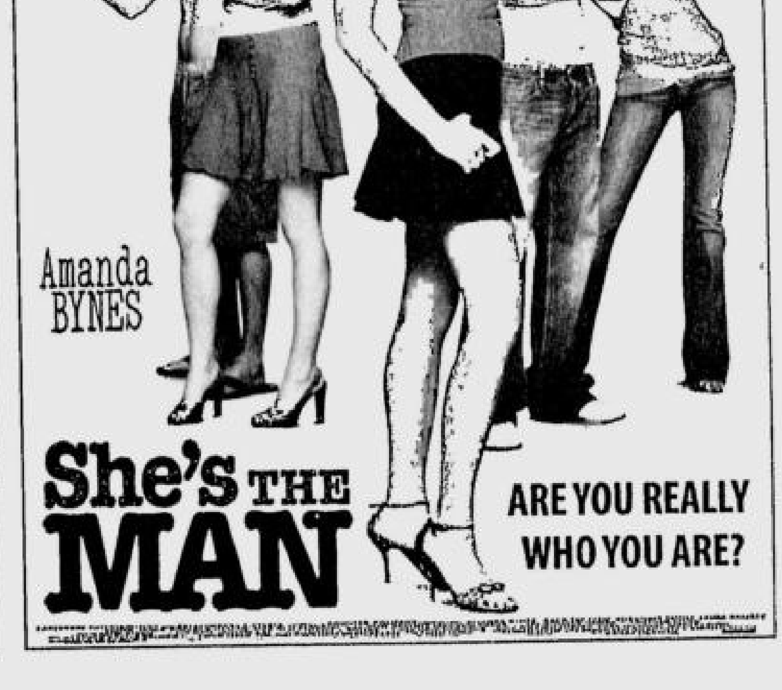
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2ND WEEK
LOVE IN DISGUISE
Amanda BYNES
She's THE MAN
ARE YOU REALLY WHO YOU ARE?

FROM HIS ? BOX

FISHED out of Boy's own box of "Fast Talk" questions in "Private Conversations":

What would a movie on your life be titled?
"*Himala ng Isang* Geisha!"

Who would play you?
Adam Sandler.

Describe your first kiss.
Fast and wet!

If you were not you, who would you like to be?
Paris Hilton!

Has any woman come on to you?
Oh yes! I almost puked.

Mirror, mirror . . .

From page A2-8

lives. You see, we read so many guidelines for a successful life that we limit the possibilities. That doesn't apply to me.

I will be a geisha, a high-flying b---h, good son. I will be whatever. I'm capable of living multiple orgasmic lifetimes (laughs).

Would you go back to anyone of those?

I'm still in them. I'm still connected to who I was 20 years ago. I acknowledge and respect what that life means to me now. I don't deny my past.

When people ask, "Why hosting?" I look back: At the time of [the late] Tita Conching [Sunico, Metropolitan Theater administrator], whenever we had gala nights at the Metropolitan Theater, I really dressed up. I would ask her, "Tita, can I open [the show] and announce the National Anthem?"

And as an actor, how were you?

I did the award-winning play, "Rehas sa Tubig." It was retitled "Daungan Laot." When I was given the role of the narrator, I was so proud! I found out later, however, that I would not be seen. I played the titular *lumot* (moss) and wore a veil over my head! On the night of the play, at curtain call, I took off the veil!

How many milestones are you celebrating these days?

I just had my 300th interview on "Private Conversations with Boy Abunda." We're celebrating the first anniversary of "Home Boy" and, in May, we will mark the third anniversary of "Kontrobersyal." "The Buzz" will be seven years old in June.

Which one among these shows do you enjoy the most?

Iba-ibang experience. "Home Boy" allows me to be the *probinsyano* that I am. I relate the most to the stories on that show. It allows me to talk about Tatay and him being *anak sa labas* (a child born out of wedlock). I remember that the first time I talked about this, Nanay got angry.

"Private Conversations" is very close to me. It allows me to do a lot of reading, which is my passion.

"Kontrobersyal" allows me to do investigative work and tell the stories of people who are hungry and angry.

"The Buzz" is pure show time. I take a bath, get dressed and go to "The Buzz." That's it.

How do you reconcile your roles as a journalist/newsmaker, manager/talent, publicist/social critic?

That's a very hard question.

As a journalist and newsmaker: I don't have a way of reconciling the fact that I make news and deliver it. The conflict arises only with issues that have something to with interests I protect as a manager and talent. But I'm very open. If I have the temerity to ask a scandalous question once in a while, I should also be ready to answer those same type of questions.

As a manager and talent: I have no problem there. If a job is being offered to me *or* my talent, I'll beg off and give the job to my talent. This has happened many times.

As a publicist and social critic: I don't work much as a publicist now. Although I think I made a dent in the industry as a publicist to music superstars.

Because of "Kontrobersyal," I'm involved in the news and current affairs department. I do interviews more than critiques and commentaries. I cannot be a straight newscaster who cannot show his biases.

I don't deny that I have very strong biases. That is a weakness, I must admit.

Do your strong feelings limit you in any way?

I admit there are times when that happens. But in order to verbalize something that I feel very strongly about, I take risks. If you are not appreciated by your bosses simply because you do that, *titimplahin mo*.

That's where your values will come into play. At this point in my career, I'm not too scared about that. I'm more fearless now.

For the longest time, I had to dance to everyone else's music. I was a pleaser, but now, I listen to my heart.

HE says he wouldn't mind doing a talk show "with the fish and the carabao" in Boronggan, Samar, when he retires. Meanwhile, he poses for a snapshot with INQUIRER Guyitos.

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"Moments of Love is a movie to be proud of."
- Crispina Martinez-Belen (Manila Bulletin)

"The cinematography, the set design, even the mood of the film contributed heavily sa taas ng production value ."
- Dinno Erece (Tumbok)

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River Maya (Apr. 7) Center For Pop (Apr. 2, Apr. 23) Kamikazee (Apr. 22) Starmall Edsa.

By the INQUIRER Entertainment staff
Photos by Ryan Lim

TAKE FIVE

YOU DON'T NEED TO ASK A question.

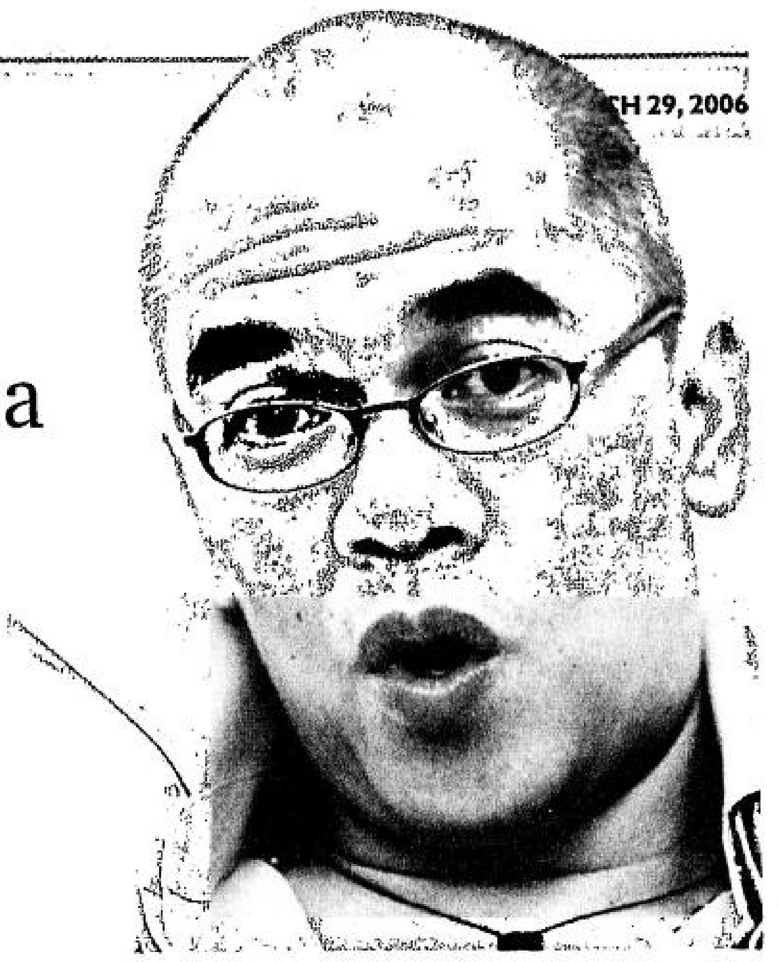
TV host-talent manager-publicist Boy Abunda can conduct a gabfest all by himself.

Whether reminiscing about his salad days in the theater or coming to terms with the inevitable curtain call, he is a gushing font of observations at once insightful and incisive.

You could use the trendy term "life coach" to sum him up but, as Abunda himself would demur, "I'm too busy living my own life."

Make that several lives in this one incarnation, an existence that could daunt the faint-hearted. The multi-hyphenated, multi-talented Mr. Abunda has plenty of himself to spare.

He's not called "Boy Abundance" for nothing.



"WHAT does it mean, to have 'arrived'? You're here today, gone tomorrow."

PHOTOS BY RYAN LIM

You just renewed your contract with ABS-CBN. Are you being paid top money?

I can't complain. I'm paid well enough to enjoy a lifestyle that I hardly get to enjoy. That's the irony of it. As I was saying recently to Bong (Quintana, his longtime partner), "Now, that we can afford to go to Hong Kong or Phuket [anytime we want], we don't have the time." I know I'm paid well [because] I'm a talent manager, I know the landscape. I know that jobs are not easy these days.

Tell us about your hungry years.

When my father passed away, I dropped out of school. I asked my mother, "Please allow me to look for a job that I will enjoy."

I worked in a restaurant. I sold fire extinguishers. I sold soap and shampoo. I sold encyclopedia. I did all sorts of things just to survive. Until I made friends with people who were doing street theater at the time. They used to rehearse at the Paco Park.

Then I worked at the Metropolitan Theater. I used to rent a place in Mabini, with bar girls for roommates! Our "bedrooms" were divided only by *mantel* (tablecloth). I stayed there for more than two years. I must have been in my 20s then, but I was no longer a virgin (laughs)!

Before I joined the Met's PR department, I was assistant stage manager. My job was to count the props. I was good at it! I'm proud of that. Everybody left work at 7 p.m.; I was there until 12 midnight. Then I became an actor. It was P50 per performance.

Did you enjoy that stint with the Met?

Oh, yeah! [Those were] the best years of my life.

But how difficult was it living in Malate with bar girls?

I didn't think it was difficult at the time because I was having a ball!

When did you realize that you had finally arrived?

I can't say it was an inspired moment. You neither annotate nor rhapsodize on your life. You work hard and suddenly you realize that things are happening that you never even imagined!

When Regine Velasquez was still very new in the business, people behind her shows told her, "You need to hire Boy as publicist!" For me, arrive *na ako no'n*!

We heard you did your first PR jobs using a typewriter and public phone?

Yes. I had left the Met and already living in an apartment, but I had no phone. My first clients were singers I had worked with at the theater, like Martin (Nievera), Pops (Fernandez) and Zsa Zsa (Padilla). The house with the phone was five doors away. When I said: "Hello, Zsa Zsa," the phone's owner would say, unbelieving, "*Uy*, Zsa Zsa *daw* (laughs)?"

Going back to that "arrival" question ... I'm not saying it out of false humility, but what does it mean, "arrive *ka na*"?

Does it have something to do with how much money you're making? Does it have to do with how many people recognize you on the streets?

There are different benchmarks. But when you're a manager who have seen careers come and go, you're more realistic. You know how temporary that "arrive" moment is. You're here today, gone tomorrow.

Are you prepared for the inevitable?

You don't prepare for being a has-been. It happens to each and every one of us. When you go up, you should also expect to go down. But knowing that this happens softens the blow. It also makes you more cautious, more human, more respectful and makes you work harder.

This is the reason I'm very shy to talk about how big or influential I've become. I'm still too busy running the race.

But that doesn't mean that I don't relish moments of fame. It's fun if you know how to handle it. But it can also be toxic. My exposure in theater, my hungry years and being a manager all help in this aspect.

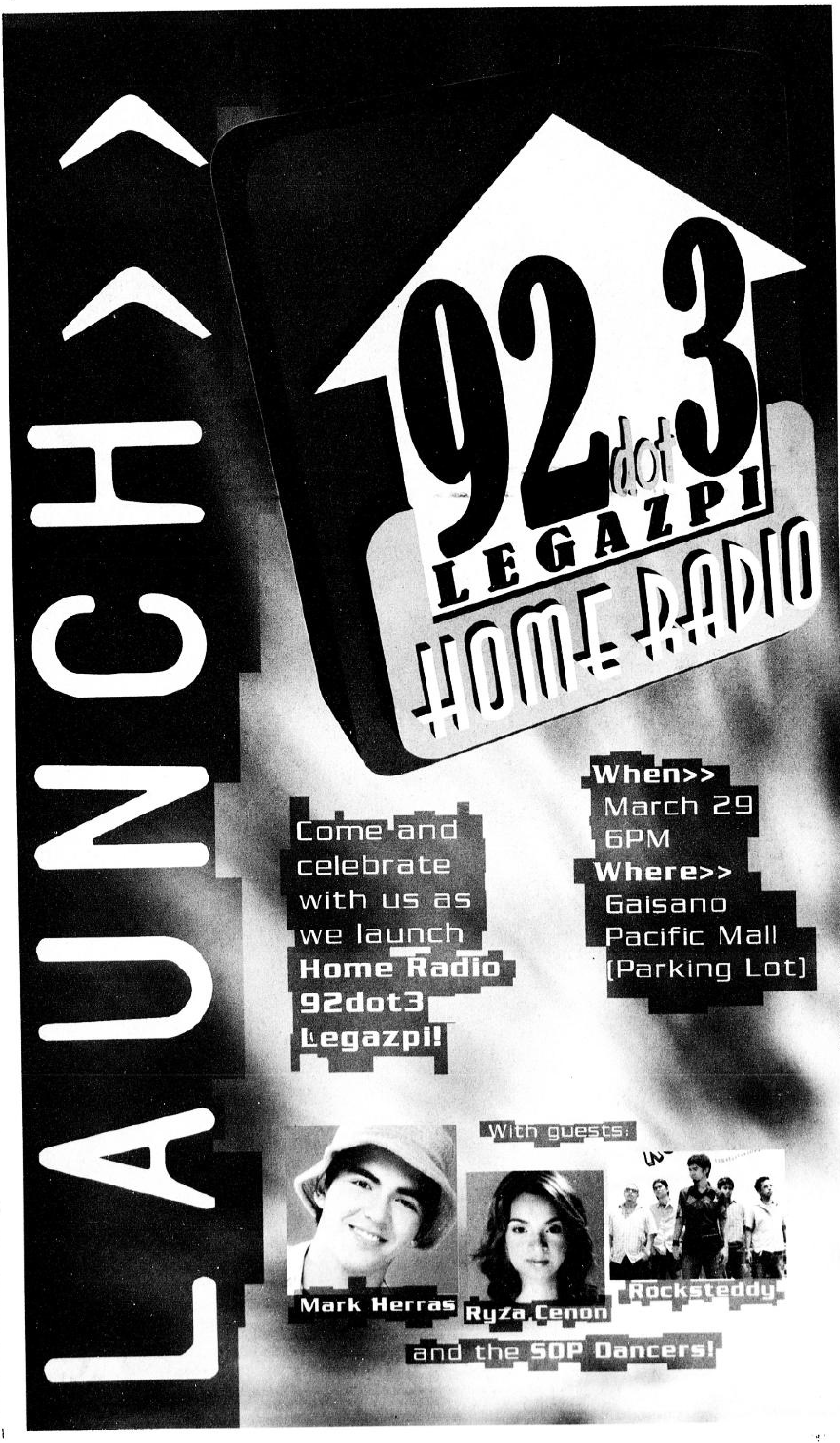
You said once that you'd gladly return to the province and plant *kamote* when that day comes.

Oh yes! I'm not afraid to go home (to Boronggan, Eastern Samar, where he was born and raised) When all of this is done, I will host a talk show with the fish and the carabao and have a good laugh.

Do you sometimes feel you are living so many lifetimes in this one?

Yes. I've never been afraid to live those

MIRROR/ A2-7



MAGBAYAD NG TAMANG BUWIS
bago ang April 17 deadline.
19 DAYS TO GO
Ang Aking Kontribusyon Sa Solusyon

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$200-M subway to link MRT-3, LRT-1

'Grand Central' station to connect Metro with North, South Luzon

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE TRANSPORTATION department is now finalizing the design of the rail system that will link the Edsa-based Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) with the older Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) from North Avenue in Quezon City to Monumento in Caloocan City.

Speaking to reporters recently, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that up to $200 million would be needed to finance the project's civil works phase.

Dubbed MRT-3 Phase 2, the rail link will run for 5.12 kilometers stretching from the North Avenue MRT station to Roosevelt, Balintawak and Monumento.

The centerpiece of the project will be a rail system that will travel underground in some sections of the northern portions of Edsa to avoid existing obstructions.

"What we intend to do here is [to] go underground," he said. "We will have a subway because of some technical problems."

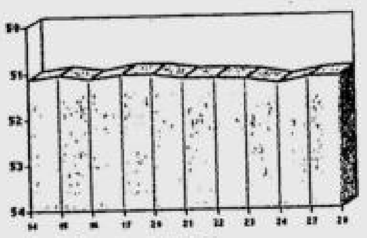
Mendoza said the Department of Transportation and Communications has already hired a consultant, the Louis Berger Group, which was tasked to submit the project's design before month's end.

Louis Berger is a US-based engineering consultancy firm presently handling major contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan for

$200-M/ B5

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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As of 5 p.m., March 28, 2006

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As of 5 p.m., March 28, 2006

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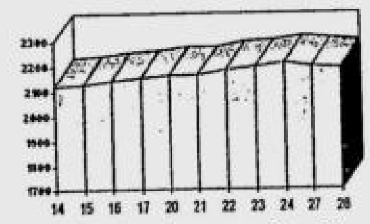
STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares fall for 2nd day

SHARES DECLINED FOR A SECOND day yesterday as investors locked in profits after last week's gains propelled the index to a nearly seven-year high.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index fell 9.16 points, or 0.4 percent, to 2,186.79, after shedding 0.6 percent Monday. On Friday, the index rose to its best close in nearly seven years, hitting 2,208.13.

"This is part of the correction that we've anticipated, especially after the index hit the psychological mark of 2,200 last week," said AB Capital Securities analyst Erwin Balita. "Investors are also cautious ahead of the Fed meeting."

While financial markets have more or less discounted another 25-basis-point US interest rate increase at the end of the Federal Reserve policy meeting Tuesday, there was un-

SHARES/ B4

WHAT'S INSIDE

Public sector deficit seen to drop in '05 /B2
Meralco posted P411-M loss in '05 /B3

Gov't lowers growth target

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT HAS CUT SLIGHTLY ITS economic growth target and at the same time lowered its inflation forecast given the impact of the appreciating peso.

The Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordination Committee approved in a meeting late Monday a slight reduction in the country's gross domestic product growth forecast for 2006 to 5.5-6.2 percent from the earlier range of 5.7-6.3 percent.

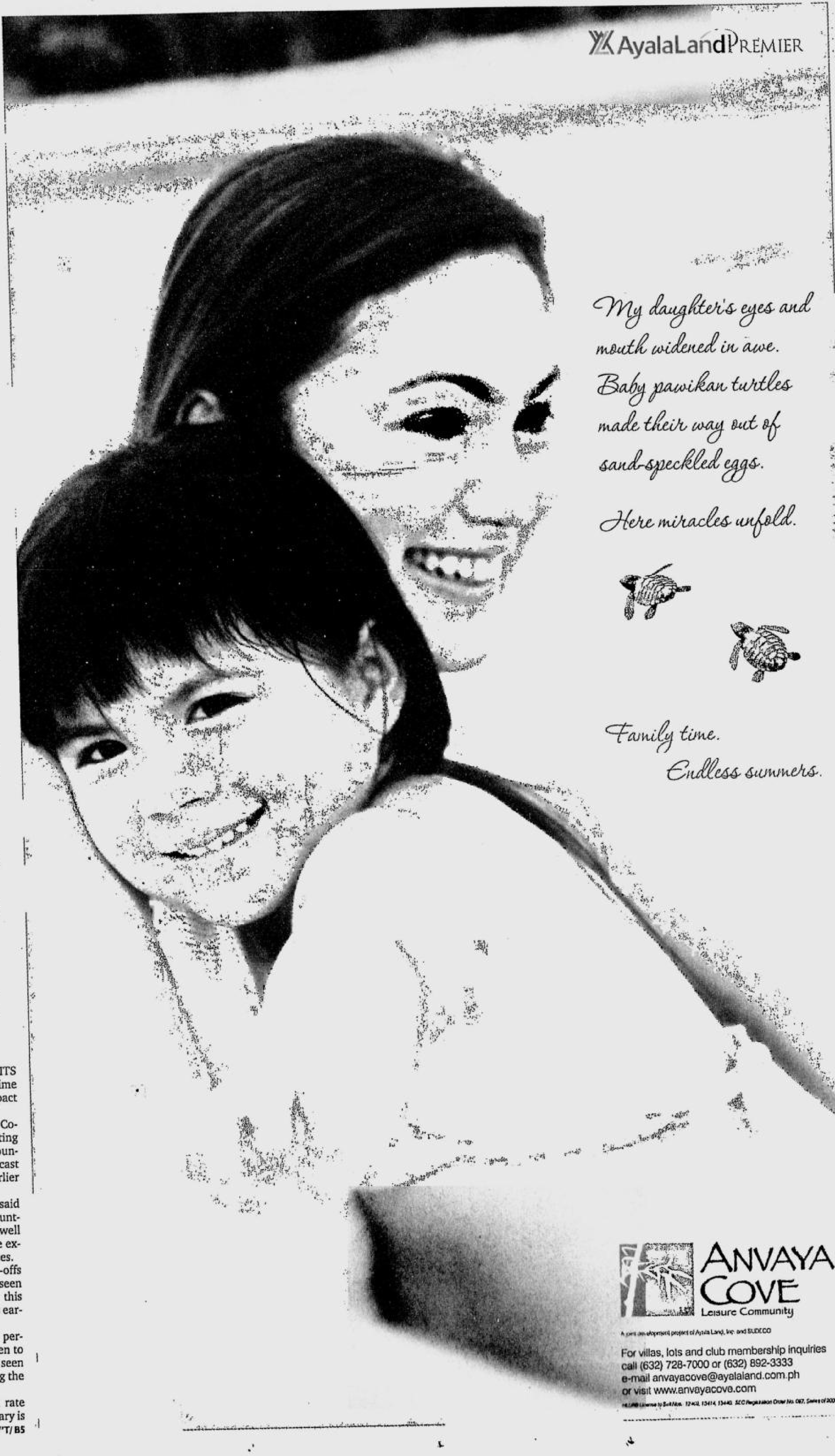
Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the slight revision factored in some accounting adjustments on the nominal GDP as well as the expected softening of merchandise export earnings and continuing high oil prices.

But the rising peso, despite some trade-offs in terms of shrinking export margins, is seen to help cap the country's inflation rate this year to 7.3-7.9 percent versus the DBCC's earlier projection of 8-8.5 percent.

The peso, which has appreciated by 6 percent last year and continued to strengthen to three-and-a-half year highs this year, is seen to ease inflationary pressures by lowering the cost of imports.

The increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent starting last February is

GOV'T/ B5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Exporters warned against non-compliance with China quarantine standards

By Ronnel W. Domingo and Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL MANGO EXPORTERS HAVE been warned that they must comply with international quarantine standards after China intercepted several shipments from the Philippines that were said to contain fruitflies.

China has since drawn up stricter rules regarding shipments from the Philippines, which would take effect in May.

Government data show that export volumes of mangoes went up 56 percent to 2,853 tons in 2005 from 1,821 tons the year before.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said China's move was in line with its government's desire to protect its agricultural produce from pest infestation.

Mango growers have also expressed their concern that the La Niña weather would hurt local production and drag down potential earnings this year.

The La Niña, marked by the early onset of torrential rains, may benefit some other crops like rice, but not mangoes, according to Roberto Amores, Philippine Mango Exporters Confederation Inc. president.

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Public sector deficit seen to drop in '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES IS EXPECTED TO post a much lower consolidated public sector deficit of about P152 billion in end-2005, from the ceiling of P180 billion set by fiscal managers.

Authorities cited improved cash flows from most state-owned corporations.

Based on latest estimates from the Department of Finance, the CPSD for 2005 would account for about 2.8 percent of the country's gross domestic product—much lower than the programmed ratio of 3.4 percent.

The CPSD estimate for 2005 would likewise represent a sharp decline from the actual deficit of P233.5 billion recorded in 2004, which was equivalent to 4.8 percent of GDP.

Authorities are closely monitoring the performance of major government-owned and -controlled corporations to make sure that their losses would not undermine the government's fiscal consolidation efforts.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said that half of the projected CPSD for 2005 would likely be due to losses incurred by the National Food Authority, the country's sole rice-importing agency.

"The NFA stepped up its importation of rice last year to prepare for the El Niño dry spell," Beltran said.

In the past, it was the National Power Corp. that had always weighed down the CPSD.

But the government has recently started to privatize some of its assets. Also, the state utility actually improved its fiscal performance dramatically. Last year, the NPC was expected to have cut its losses to half of GDP, or a third of the level posted in 2004.

The final CPSD numbers are expected to be released by the DOF over the next few days, Beltran said.

The International Monetary Fund, in its latest report on the Philippines, said it would be good to set a deficit ceiling for each corporation to improve their individual governance.

The IMF also stressed that power sector privatization should be accelerated to bring in more fresh investments.

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ROUND-UP

FPHC nets higher income

THE LOPEZ-LED FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS Corp. reported that its net income for 2005 reached P4.9 billion, based on audited financial statements. This would reflect a 38 percent increase from FPHC's P3.3 billion net income recorded in 2004.

The audited financial statements were approved by the company's board of directors yesterday, FPHC said in a disclosure to the PSE. Revenue in 2005 hit P55 billion. It was much higher than the 2004 revenue of P39.9 billion. FPHC has business interests in energy, infrastructure, property development, construction, manufacturing and securities transfer services.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Plan for Transco scrapped

THE POWER Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has scrapped the planned full privatization of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco), opting instead to have the state firm retain a 15-percent equity in the nationwide transmission grid.

According to PSALM, having Transco keep a 15-percent equity in the transmission network would enable the government "to share in any upside of the business."

"Another benefit of the new proposed scheme is that it would maximize the possibility of the privatization's success while protecting government interest," PSALM said.

The revised proposal was also drafted in response to concerns raised by investors on technical pre-qualification.

Based on the original bid terms, Transco's privatization will be done in two phases. For the prefranchise phase, the concessionaire will perform only "delegable" functions. In the second phase, which already involves a franchise, the concessionaire will perform all functions related to the operation and management of the nationwide transmission grid.

Abigail L. Ho

MWSS seeks bridge financing

THE METROPOLITAN Waterworks and Sewerage System is seeking some P1.5 billion or $30 million in bridge financing from foreign and local banks to pay for obligations that will mature before the end of the first semester.

The MWSS Board of Directors has revealed that it is expecting the entry of new investors to the scene. But the investors will come in by the second semester, prompting the board to decide to acquire the loans and settle its obligations falling due on the second quarter, MWSS sources said.

"We are working closely with the Department of Finance in seeking these borrowings," MWSS Finance Department head Estrellito Polloso said.

Polloso explained that the MWSS has been tapping the $120-million performance bond which Maynilad posted. But he said the fund would soon run out, making it urgent for the MWSS to secure the bridge financing by next month.

The MWSS last year borrowed close to P10 billion to pay for the unpaid obligations of Maynilad.

Financially ailing Maynilad have not fully paid its concession fees to MWSS.

Christine A. Gaylican

Traders slam Customs rules

LOCAL exporters yesterday criticized the Bureau of Customs for issuing a series of directives which, they claim, will only worsen the red tape at the agency and increase the expenses of companies.

The BoC on March 6 issued Customs Administrative Order No. 3-2006. The following day, it came out with Customs Memorandum Order No. 6-2006. The orders spell out the rules for accreditation of brokers.

In a statement sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo, 44 signatories representing various industry associations under the umbrella group Philippine Exporters Confederation said that the Customs directives ran counter to what was previously agreed upon during the drafting of the Customs Brokers Law's implementing rules.

"The orders, which allegedly implement Republic Act No. 9280, seriously deviate from and violate the provisions of the IRR, as they prevent exporters from processing their export documents themselves," the group said. "As the orders are explained, the rights of exporters granted under the IRR to RA 9280 to process their own export documentation are effectively curtailed."

The exporters also said that the orders would mean additional red tape and expenses for their shipments, which would make Philippine products uncompetitive in world trade.

"We urge (the President) to hold back the implementation of (the two orders) until such time that they are properly amended and modified, to uphold the exporters' rights," Philexport said.

Philexport said the new law would worsen the plight of the export sector, which has been battered by the continuing appreciation of the peso. The group described the Customs Brokers law as the knock-out punch to the "already wobbly" sector.

Ronnel W. Domingo

Meralco posted ₱411-M loss in '05

Provision for probable losses, change in accounting rules cited

By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA ELECTRIC CO., THE COUNTRY'S largest private electricity distributor, suffered a P411-million net loss in 2005 even despite the 14.9-percent increase in revenue from the previous year.

The company largely attributed the loss to provisioning for probable losses due to an adverse Supreme Court ruling combined with the transition from the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles to the Philippine Financial Reporting Standards/Philippine Accounting Standards.

For 2005, Meralco booked a P5.9-billion provision for probable losses stemming from a pending Supreme Court decision on its rates unbundling case.

The Supreme Court upheld a Court of Appeals decision nullifying the Energy Regulatory Commission's approval of the power distributor's unbundled rates.

The ruling also effectively nullified an ERC-approved rate hike of 17 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

The distribution utility had earlier said that it would reflect a probable loss of at least P500 million every month until the issuance of the final decision, exclusive of the 32-percent tax shield.

The transition to new accounting policies, on the other hand, wiped out the company's supposed P599-million net income for the year, excluding the provision for probable losses.

Without the provision and the transition to new accounting policies, the company should have registered a net income of P4.4 billion, the company said.

Meralco, however, said that the P411-million net loss in 2005 was almost 80 percent lower than its restated net loss of more than P2 billion in 2004.

The company's revenues rose 14.9 percent to P174.3 billion last year from P151.6 billion the year before.

The revenue rise was attributed to the 0.6-percent sales growth that the power distributor registered last year, coupled with the increase in purchased power costs.

Revenue from the sale of electricity grew 15.9 percent to P170.9 billion in 2005 from P147.4 billion the previous year.

The strong electricity sales mainly came from the commercial sector and from the One Day Power Sales, a program being implemented with the National Power Corp., to industrial customers.

Sales to the commercial sector grew 3.6 percent, fueled by the opening of new shopping malls and the expansion of existing malls.

The industrial sector remained flat, while the residential market continued to contract.

DTI dismisses petition for cement safeguard duty

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY has dismissed with finality the petition of a group of cement companies to extend the imposition of safeguard duties for imported cement.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the decision was made after the Supreme Court order voiding DTI-imposed safeguard measures became final and executory last Oct. 5.

Favila explained that the case stemmed from a Cemap petition filed in November 2004 asking for an extension of the protective measures that the DTI imposed in August 2003.

The DTI imposed a three-year safeguard tariff of P15.60 a 40-kilogram bag of imported Portland cement starting Dec. 1, 2001, following a finding contrary to that of the TC.

When the duty lapsed late in 2004, the DTI decided that it should be extended and increased to P29.60 a bag.

Fair trade advocates had scored the Supreme Court's decision saying it did not heed the provisions of the law as well as those of the Constitution that promotes the use of labor and goods that are available and made in the country.

According to the Fair Trade Alliance, the ruling also did not recognize the World Trade Organization provision for such safeguard duties.

Similar to dumping and countervailing measures, a safeguard duty was one of the trade protection measures available under the agreement with the WTO.

Applied to agricultural and non-agricultural products, a safeguard duty is an additional duty imposed on imported articles in case there is a finding that substantial importation has directly caused injury to the domestic industry.

The TC, however, said that the local industry did not face any harm due to the entry of increased quantities of imported cement.

Piracy stunting cable industry, group says

By Daxim L. Lucas

RAMPANT PIRACY, AGGRAVATED by a slew of restrictive and lax regulation, is stunting the growth of the local cable television industry, according to the findings of a regional industry organization released yesterday.

In a press statement, the Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (Casbaa)—an umbrella group of 110 cable TV firms—said that the Philippines continued to have underdeveloped cable TV markets "because of piracy and weak regulatory structures."

At the same time however, Casbaa said that if cable TV policy changes were adopted, they should help the Philippines "leapfrog other markets and enjoy substantial benefits within a relatively short period."

The findings were contained in a report entitled "Regulating for Growth: Effective Regulation of the Pay-TV Industry in the Asia-Pacific," which was undertaken by Casbaa in association with research firm Media Partners Asia.

"Enforcement of copyright law remains weak; signal piracy by rogue cable TV operators is theoretically a criminal offense but cases brought by the authorities are rare," the group's statement said.

It pointed out that license suspension or revocation as a sanction for copyright violators had not been effectively applied, attributing this directly to "the lack of a clear mandate and resources for the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC)."

"[The NTC] issues cable operating licenses without examining whether programming is misappropriated and resold," the report said.

Although some features of the Philippine regulatory regime were described as "pro-market"—such as an absence of restrictions on tiering of program offerings, advertising, or rate regulation—industry players cannot fully leverage these and make successful investments either in content or technology because program content is at risk of being stolen and resold while the government "appears unable to address the problem," the group said.

Similarly, "interventionist regulatory guidelines" such as those prohibiting exclusivity of channel supply and a ban on foreign investment in cable TV platforms further contribute to the stunted growth of the local industry, it added.

Foreign ownership is currently prohibited in cable TV or "direct-to-home" platforms.

"Only China, where media ownership is controlled for political reasons, equals the Philippines' strict ban," the statement said.

Among the 11 Asian economies evaluated in the report, the Philippines ranked 9th in terms of cable TV investment.

Annual cable TV programming investment remains low at only $28.4 million primarily because programmers are discouraged by the flagrant copyright infringement, according to Casbaa.

The country also lags other Asian markets in terms of investment in infrastructure and technology with only $49.2 million invested.

"This explains why much of the Philippines cable TV infrastructure remains outdated while many countries are now enjoying the advantages of digital delivery systems and moving toward high-definition television and value-added interactive applications," the group said.

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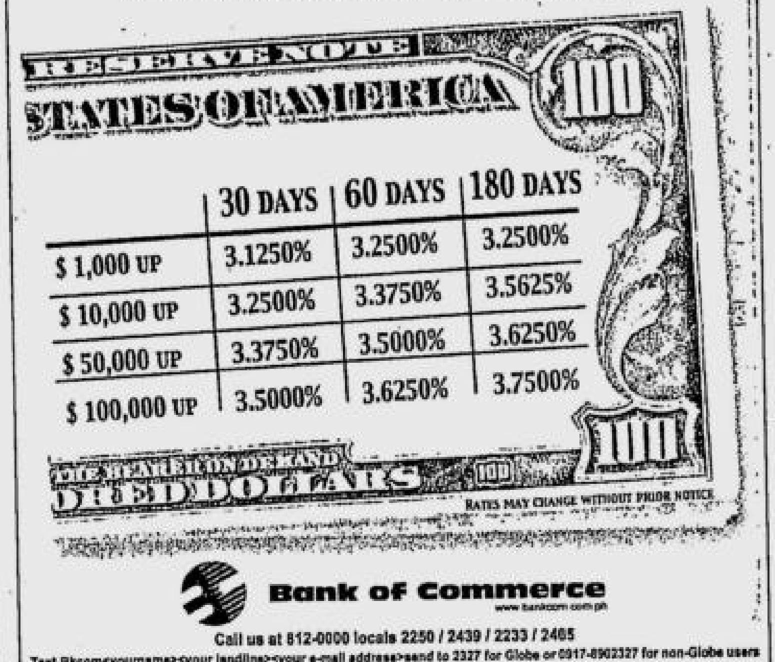

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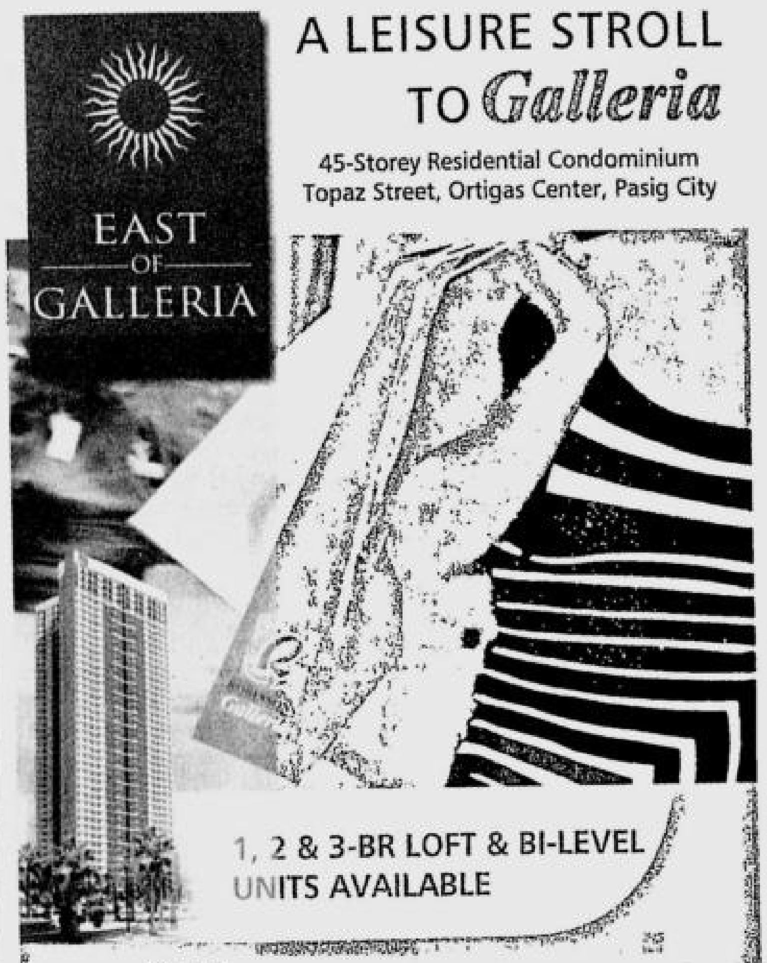

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'Smart cut Meridian (execs) out of the loop,' says former president

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE MASS RESIGNATION THAT STRUCK Meridian Telekoms Inc. earlier this week was due to moves by its new owner, Smart Communications Inc., to isolate the company's old management, according to its recently resigned president.

In a telephone interview with the INQUIRER late Monday night, former Meridian president and CEO Rene dos Remedios said Smart's management immediately moved to cut him and his team out of the loop after the company was acquired from the family of former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez.

"We were deprived of our role in Meridian," he said, shedding his earlier non-confrontational statements. "There is great disappointment on my part and Meridian employees as to what happened after the consummation of the purchase."

Smart, the main cellular phone unit of telecommunications giant PLDT, bought Meridian late last year from Jimenez reportedly for $45 million or about P2.3 billion at current exchange rates.

The deal raised eyebrows among company insiders as well as analysts who questioned the deal's valuation.

Dos Remedios said he was called to a management committee meeting after the deal was consummated only to be informed that the old management team would no longer be needed.

"[They] told me my key group had no more role in Meridian," he said, adding that PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno asked him to reconsider his decision, but he decided to push ahead with his resignation.

"After we resigned, they offered us severance pay," Dos Remedios said, saying the amount was "substantial." "We refused out of principle."

He complained that he and his team were also being "painted as the bad guys" by the company's new owners.

"It was a matter of honor already," he said.

The other day, a Smart spokesperson attributed the mass resignation to a "difference of opinion" between Meridian's old management and its new owners—a fact stressed by Dos Remedios.

"It's a severe difference of opinion if they don't think my group should be running the business that we built," he said.

Five senior Meridian managers and 35 research and development staffers resigned out of the company's 217-member compliment.

Dos Remedios said those who quit with him embodied the company's "heart and vision."

Both PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan and president Napoleon Nazareno did not reply to text queries on the issue although a company spokesman denied that Meridian's old management was treated shabbily.

"We've been very transparent with all parties concerned," Smart spokesman Ramon Isberto said in a telephone interview.

He added that the company would rather "look to the future" rather than "dwell on what happened."

"Clearly, there's been a misunderstanding," he said. "There was a misappreciation of how [they] understood [their] new role."

Smart plans to raise its stake in Meridian from 49 percent to 100 percent by the middle of this year, representing a delay in the company's initial end-2005 acquisition timetable.

Meridian provides wireless broadband and data services to small- and medium-scale businesses nationwide. It operates under a legislative franchise and was issued a provisional authority to operate by the NTC.

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Landco allots ₱4.3B for new projects

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY DEVELOPER LANDCO PACIFIC Corp., a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Corp., is setting aside P4.3 billion in the next three years to finance at least four key property projects, company president Alfred Xerez-Burgos Jr. said in a briefing Monday.

Landco is developing Playa Calatagan in Batangas, a seaside beach destination covering 62 hectares envisioned to be the "Boracay" of Luzon.

Landco is also proposing a massive tourism development at the sprawling 400-hectare Villa Escudero in San Pablo City, Laguna, which will house a sanctuary, golf, village and campus districts.

Landco officials earlier projected the company might need between P1 billion and P5 billion for its Villa Escudero development, a joint venture with the Escudero family.

The Montelago project, a 102-hectare property in San Pablo, Laguna, is part of the vast Escudero landholdings. The first phase consists of 33 hectares or 905 residential lots.

Landco will also develop a residential community in Quezon City.

Landco is likewise building a shopping center in Naga City under its Pacific Mall brand. It is teaming up with the Metro Gaisano Group for this venture. Landco has existing Pacific Malls in Nueva Ecija, Lucena and Legazpi.

Landco aims to double its revenues to P4 billion by 2007 and emerge as one of the country's top developers.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 28, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	2,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	35	35.5	34.5	35	147,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62.5	63	62	62	2,272,700
China Banking Corp.	680	680	675	675	3,200
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.4	3,870,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	78	79.5	77.5	78	215,700
International Exch. Bank	29	29	29	29	40,800
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39	39.5	38.5	39.5	1,077,100
Philippine National Bank	35	35	34.5	34.5	50,000
Phil. Savings Bank	36	36	35	36	42,400
Philippine Trust Co.	42	42	42	42	1,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.25	13.25	119,900
Security Bank Corp.	41	41	41	41	1,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	37.5	38.5	37.5	38.5	110,800
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTION					
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	24.5	25	24.5	25	16,800
Manulife Financial Corp.	3180	3180	3180	3180	80
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	157	157	157	157	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2140	2165	2140	2160	3,810
Ivantage Corp.	0.9	0.98	0.9	0.94	25,570,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	42	44.5	42	44	590,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45	45	43	43	983,500
Manila Electric Co. A	13	13	12.75	13	49,100
Manila Electric Co. B	20.25	20.25	19.5	19.5	75,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	6,105,000
Petron Corp.	4.5	4.55	4.4	4.4	3,095,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.92	0.94	0.92	0.93	370,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
CADP Group Corp.	1.8	2	1.8	2	42,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	19.5	19.5	19.5	19.5	7,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	37	37.5	36.5	36.5	64,100
Pancake House Inc.	3.7	3.75	3.7	3.75	30,000
RFM Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	70,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.42	2.42	2.38	2.38	539,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	70,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60.5	60	60.5	121,700
San Miguel Corp. B	82.5	82.5	81.5	81.5	177,300
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.75	3,430,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.31	6,840,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.48	1.5	1.44	1.46	1,773,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1	825,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.78	0.79	0.75	0.75	80,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.0675	0.07	1,500,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0775	0.08	0.0775	0.0775	800,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.58	0.58	0.56	0.56	180,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	34,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	5,000,000
Ayala Corp.	362.5	365	350	352.5	105,200
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	100,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	881,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	3,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.44	2.46	2.44	2.46	166,000
APC Group Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.235	0.235	1,300,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	6,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.91	0.91	0.89	0.89	250,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	20,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1	1.02	0.98	1	7,830,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3	3.15	3	3.15	4,370,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3	3	2.95	2.95	1,201,000
Global Business Hldgs Inc.	63	63	63	63	500
House Of Investments Inc.	1.28	1.3	1.26	1.3	525,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	6	6	5.8	5.8	1,928,000
Keppel Holdings	1	1	1	1	9,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	3,010,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	50,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.145	0.145	2,040,000
SM Investments Corp.	232	232	228	229	246,680
South China Resources Inc.	0.71	0.74	0.71	0.71	200,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13	8,350,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.75	11	10.75	10.75	9,182,900
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.31	0.38	0.31	0.35	1,450,000
Belle Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.12	1.12	6,650,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	3,050,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.82	1.88	1.82	1.86	2,293,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	26,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1	1	1	1	30,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.215	0.215	0.21	0.21	1,540,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.68	0.7	0.65	0.66	44,080,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	1,200,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.69	0.69	140,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.3	1.34	1.3	1.34	7,118,000
Interport Res. B	0.0048	0.005	0.0048	0.005	11,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	970,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.59	120,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.54	1.56	1.5	1.5	2,933,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.29	0.31	0.26	0.3	7,520,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	50,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	50,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8	8	8	8	303,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.32	0.33	0.31	0.31	11,560,000
SM Development Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.56	1.58	113,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	8	7.8	7.9	5,652,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.145	0.145	330,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	20,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.02	1.04	1	1.02	4,099,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	870	890	870	885	17,500
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3	3	2.9	2.95	4,185,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1890	1900	1890	1900	119,120
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.195	3,260,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	300,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.0525	0.05	0.0525	14,400,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.12	60,000
Philweb Corp.	0.022	0.026	0.021	0.026	1,176,800,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.06	2.12	2.06	2.12	453,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	33,013,600
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	1,310,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.86	1.86	1.82	1.84	1,283,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.46	0.47	0.44	0.44	1,590,000
EDUCATION					
IPeople Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	147,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.78	2,588,000
Paxys Inc.	8.8	8.8	8.6	8.7	253,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	0.92	0.98	0.92	0.98	20,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.2	1.2	1.12	1.16	1,744,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.34	1.38	1.3	1.3	577,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	56,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.8	3,469,000
Benguet Corp. A	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9	10,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	4,440,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	1,100,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	198,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	51,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	55,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	2.46	2.65	2.46	2.55	22,439,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.46	2.65	2.46	2.55	23,960,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	110,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.3	1,280,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,420,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	264,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	83,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.52	0.52	0.5	0.52	240,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	27,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series N	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	2,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	3,000
PLDT (10% Pref.) SerieS U	11	11	11	11	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	11.75	11.75	11.5	11.5	39,600

CURRENCIES

March 28, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.832154	1.000000	51.1700
Japan	Yen	0.007131	0.008569	0.4385
United Kingdom	Pound	1.454023	1.747300	89.4093
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.107251	0.128884	6.5950
Switzerland	Franc	0.635961	0.764234	39.1059
Canada	Dollar	0.711669	0.855213	43.7612
Singapore	Dollar	0.514120	0.617818	31.6137
Australia	Dollar	0.587514	0.706015	36.1268
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.208185	2.653576	135.7835
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.221878	0.266631	13.6435
Brunei	Dollar	0.512536	0.615915	31.5164
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000092	0.000111	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.021424	0.025745	1.3174
UAE	Dirham	0.226591	0.272294	13.9333
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.201700	61.4910
Argentina	Peso	0.270180	0.324675	16.6136
India	Rupee	0.018667	0.022432	1.1478
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.225272	0.270709	13.8522
Mexico	New Peso	0.075933	0.091249	4.6692
South Africa	Rand	0.132431	0.159142	8.1433
Korea	Won	0.000853	0.001025	0.0524
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025580	0.030740	1.5730

Shares fall for 2nd day

From page B1

certainty over how it will affect US monetary policy, traders said.

Stocks that contributed heavily to the index loss were Ayala Land, off 2.3 percent at P10.75, and Bank of the Philippine Islands, lower by 0.8 percent at P62 on continued profit-taking.

Limiting the market loss were Philex "A," which rose 7.1 percent to P2.55, and Philex "B," which was higher by 4.5 percent at P2.55. The mining concern said Monday its board approved the declassification of the company's stocks into common shares.

Analysts said the declassification should boost the stock's liquidity and increase investor interest in Philex. AP

Toyota seeks to grow ranks of skilled auto workers

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

FUTURE automotive experts learn the basics from the Toyota scholarship program.

THE LACK OF EXPERTS IN THE specialized field of automotive repair and maintenance has long plagued the industry, but Toyota Motor Philippines Foundation Inc. seeks to provide a long-term solution through its market-driven scholarship program.

Under the scholarship program, underprivileged youth are taught skills and provided training that would make them employable in the automotive industry, not just Toyota, upon graduation.

TMPF president David Go said in an interview that the scholarship program not only benefits the students, but the companies as well.

Go explained that the program provides companies such as Toyota, including their extensive dealer networks, a steady stream of graduates with the right qualifications to help keep operations going.

There are currently 12 vocational partner schools providing a pipeline of skilled, talented and employable manpower to Toyota Motor Philippines and its network of more than 23 dealers.

Toyota provides the engines and the curriculum that the students can work on, while the partner schools take care of implementing the curriculum and actually training the students.

Partner schools include the Mariano Marcos State University in Laoag, Lingayon Technological Institute, Don Bosco College-Canlubang, Alcantara National Trade School in Romblon and Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Since the program was implemented, more than 400 of the vocational scholars have been employed by the Toyota network.

Other graduates have either moved on to other careers or put up their own businesses, using training that they got through Toyota's Youth Business Camps.

Toyota believes that not all are meant for employment, thus, should be provided skills to enable them to go out on their own.

Not content with just churning automotive technical/vocational graduates, Toyota last year took the next step by introducing the Expended Tertiary Education, Equivalency and Accreditation Program in partnership with the Mapua Institute of Technology.

The program is intended to provide the opportunity to both Toyota scholars and employees the chance to earn a college/university degree in Automotive Engineering while working with Toyota.

The curriculum developed with Mapua is unique as it integrates Toyota principles and philosophies and recognizes the value of the actual work experiences and seminars undergone by the Toyota scholars or employees.

TMPF education sector head Ramon Ventura Jr. said the Automotive Engineering program would enable Toyota to develop people with a higher set of skills that would ultimately redound to the benefit of the company.

"This is part of our philosophy to improve ourselves and to continue professionalizing our ranks," Ventura said.

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Rewards, layoffs await revenue collecting agencies, Teves says

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC Zone—They either get 20 percent of the excess collections or be laid off from work.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said here last week that such incentive or penalty awaits personnel of the bureaus of internal revenue, customs and treasury charged with meeting targets as government implements the lateral attrition law (Republic Act No. 9335).

Teves said that while revenue collection employees were entitled to get rewards, their poor performance could lead to their being "frozen, relieved or altogether moved out of service after due process."

The Bureau of Internal Revenue set a collection goal of P675 billion for 2006; the Bureau of Customs, P190 billion; and the Bureau of Treasury, P51.9 billion.

Teves said the law, which was approved in 2005, was already being followed. It aims to improve the revenue collection performance of the BIR and BOC through the creation of a rewards and incentives fund and of a revenue performance evaluation board.

A congressional oversight committee, he said, would approve the law's implementing rules and regulations.

Comparing the January-February figures for 2005 and 2006, Teves said BIR's collections increased from P73.7 billion to P91.2 billion, and BOC's from P19.8 billion to P25.6 billion. It is only the Bureau of Treasury's collections that fell by 1.5 percent from P12.7 billion to P12.6 billion.

Revenues in 2005, at P795.7 billion, were up 13.7 percent from 2004, he said.

He said the directions this year were focused on intensifying tax administration and collection efficiency, improving debt management and strengthening the management and self-reliance of government-owned and controlled corporations, financing institutions, social insurance systems and local governments. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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From page B1

seen contributing to inflationary pressures particularly in the first semester, but based on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' projections, the rise in consumer prices should taper off in the second semester.

However, a softer growth of 8 percent is expected from export earnings against earlier expectations of a 10 percent expansion.

A continued improvement in the government's fiscal performance is also seen driving interest rates lower based on the bellwether 91-day Treasury bill rates, or to an average of 6.8-7.5 percent from the earlier forecast of 7.5-8.5 percent.

Average crude oil cost, a major factor behind the rise in the inflation rate, is seen to hover at $62 a barrel this year, further rising from the old forecast of $56-60.

Meanwhile, the more bearish outlook for exports factored in the sluggish demand for electronics, account for 60 percent of total export receipts.

Despite the weaker trade position expected for this year and next year, the BSP expects the current account to remain in a surplus, resulting in a balance-of-payments surplus of about $1.6 billion this year.

$200-M subway to link MRT-3, LRT-1

From page B1

the American government.

Once completed, Mendoza said the Monumento station would become the central railway station linking LRT-1 with MRT-3 and the planned North Rail project that will connect Metro Manila with Bulacan province.

Eventually, the planned South Rail system that will link Metro Manila with the rest of southern Luzon will also have its terminal at the Monumento station, which Mendoza described as the future "Grand Central" station of the country.

Once Louis Berger has submitted its design proposal, the bidding process for the project would follow, he said.

At present, the MRT-3 system is linked by pedestrian access in Cubao with the LRT Line-2, which travels the Recto-Santolan route. A pedestrian link also connects the LRT-1 to the LRT-2 at the Doroteo Jose station. A similar pedestrian link connects MRT-3 with the LRT-1 at the Taft-Edsa stations of both systems.

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Augusto Carlos Valdes Camara

(September 24, 1978 - March 17, 2006)

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 17, 2006

Beloved son of **Jorge and Binky**

Beloved grandson of **Augusto and Felicing Camara**
Carlos and Aida (†) Valdes

Beloved nephew of: **Sylvia, Crissie, Ricky, Philip, Mike, Leo, Pinky, Joey, Mandy, Lisa & Martin, Gabby, Butch, Nena, Chona, Johnny, Teri, Barry, Gina, Benjie (†), Regina**

A memorial mass will be held on Saturday April 1, 2006 at 3:30pm at the Urdaneta Village Friendship Hall. Prayers and masses for the eternal repose of his soul will be appreciated.

In
Loving
Memory
Of

FELIX ORDAS ALFELOR SR.

Outstanding Governor, Province of Camarines Sur 1970 – 72
Founder, University of Northeastern Philippines
On his
25th Death Anniversary, **March 30, 2006**
94th Birth Anniversary, May 2, 2006

Schedule of Requiem Masses offered for the Eternal Repose of the soul of (†) **Felix Sr.**
(March 30, 2006) :

University Divine Mercy Chapel *UNEP, Iriga City*	3:00 p.m.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel *Concepcion Pequeña, Naga City*	6:30 a.m.
St. Anne Basilica *Scranton, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*	8:30 a.m. (Phil. Time) Over Family Land TV Channel
St. Anthony of Padua Parish *Iriga City*	7:00 a.m.
Our Lady of Salvation Parish *Salvacion, Iriga City*	7:00 a.m.
Our Lady of Fatima Shrine *San Isidro, Iriga City*	6:30 a.m.
Our Lady of Sorrow Parish *Sto. Domingo, Iriga City*	6:30 a.m.
St. Therese of Lisieux Parish *Sta. Teresita, Iriga City*	6:15 a.m.
Holy Cross Parish *Nabua, Cam. Sur*	6:30 a.m.
Holy Trinity Parish *Bato, Cam. Sur*	7:00 a.m.
St. Therese of Avila Parish *Baao, Cam. Sur*	6:00 a.m.
Our Lady of Prompt Soccur Parish *Haring, Canaman, Cam. Sur*	6:00 a.m.
St. Francis of Assisi Parish *Buhi, Cam. Sur*	6:00 a.m.

We, **Dr. Remedios R. Alfelor** and children, **Ex-Congressman Ciriaco (†)** nee: **Alma Yorobe; Congressman Felix Jr.** nee: **Emma Garchitorena; Dr. Filipinas, Eleanor, Delicia and Arch. Eduardo Tibi, Ex-Mayor Emmanuel; Ariel** nee: **Ida Lee; Dr. Rupert** nee: **Jina-Luz Zamudio** and grandchildren: **Dr. Tshombee; Mayor Madel and Bong Gazmen; Atty. Peachy and Mon Moraleda;** and all grandchildren and great grandchildren request all his loved ones, relatives, friends and pious readers to join us in prayers for his bliss and eternal rest.

We would like to thank everyone, who in one way was touched by the meaningful life of (†) Felix Sr.

Emilio J. Aguila

(of San Jose, Batangas and
a devotee of the Divine Mercy)

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on March 27, 2006 at the age of 96.

His children **Cynthia, Enya, Butch** and **Kiddy**; grandchildren **Steve, Joanne, Richard** and **Cristina**; and great-grandchild **Erin** request their friends to join them in prayers. In lieu of flowers, please donate instead to charitable institutions for the poor.

His remains lie in state at the Don Bosco Church along Pasay Road, Makati City. Interment will be on Friday, March 31, 2006 at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City after the 8:30 A.M. Mass at Don Bosco.

The Provincial Government of Bulacan
headed by **Governor Josefina Mendoza-Dela Cruz,**
and the Sangguniang Panlalawigan
headed by **Vice-Governor Aurelio S. Plamenco,**
the Board Members, Officials, and Employees

mourn the early demise of their Beloved

Hon. WARLITO G. TRINIDAD

of
Santol, Balagtas, Bulacan
Born: December 5, 1964 • Died: March 24, 2006

Board Member, 2nd District - Bulacan 2004-2006
Former Vice-Mayor, Municipality of Balagtas 2001-2004
Former Councilor, Municipality of Balagtas 1998-2001

His remains lie at their residence in 87 Jordan Valley Subdivision, Santol, Balagtas, Bulacan. His body will be transferred to the Provincial Capitol of Bulacan, Malolos City for vigil & necrological services on March 31, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. to April 1st 2006, 12:00 noon.

Interment will be on April 1st 2006 at the Doña Encarnacion Memorial Park, Wawa, Balagtas after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at San Lorenzo Parish Church, Poblacion, Balagtas, Bulacan.

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ATTY. DULCE MARIE MAGSAMBOL-FADRI

Peacefully joined our Lord on March 26, 2006
at the age of 48.

Her loving husband, **Jose Jr.** and daughter **Desiree**, mother **Violeta**, brothers, **Boyet, Benjie, Andy, Ernie** and **FM**, nephews and nieces, in-laws, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Capilla Del Senor, Santuario De San Antonio, Mckinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City.

Interment will be on Friday, March 31, 2006 at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Capilla Del Senor at Santuario De San Antonio Parish.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

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Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

Evelyn Ongsansoy-Marcelo

wish to convey our deepest appreciation to all of you, our relatives and friends, who spent precious time with us, sent flowers, mass cards, gave donations, or in some other way expressed your love, concern and support in celebrating *Evelyn's* coming home to her Creator.

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
(2 Timothy 4)

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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Message of Thanks

The family of the late

FLORANTE B. MAYOR

who passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 22, 2006

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered their masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

ESTRELLA MERCADO HIZON

of Apalit, Pampanga and La Loma, Quezon City

has peacefully joined her Creator on March 27, 2006.

Her beloved sister **Flora**; deceased brothers and sisters **Fernando, Ricardo, Gloria, Virgilio, Arturo, Benjamin** and **Perla**; nieces, nephews and grandchildren; brother and sisters-in-law, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel K, Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. Interment will be on Thursday morning, March 30 at the La Loma Cemetery.

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NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION	
		DATE & TIME	PLACE
Concepcion F. Bundang	Chapel B, Q.C.	3/30/06; 9:00 a.m.	Holy Cross
Ricardo P. De Guia	Chapel B-8, Q.C.	4/01/06; 2:00 p.m.	Holy Cross
Romulo Saradolla Reyes	Chapel C-12, Q.C.	3/30/06; 1:00 p.m.	North Cemetery

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"...absent from the body
.... present with the Lord."
II Cor 5:8

Beatriz Mendez Livioco

(Tita Betty)

went home to be with her Saviour,
on the 27th of March 2006 at the age of 75.

She will be missed by her husband **Atty. Enrique**; children: **Butch-Nestor, Elizabeth, Maria Jovita, Rev. Dr. Roberto Jose** and **Mario Adriano**; in-laws: **Renee, Estee, Frank, Imelda** and **Fatima**; grandchildren; great grandchildren and other relatives and friends.

Her body lies in state at Chapels 1 & 2, Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Necrological services shall be on Thursday, March 30, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. Interment shall be on Friday, March 31, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Ernesto L. Garcia, Sr.

"Ernie"

Peacefully joined our Lord
on March 26, 2006 at the age of 63.

His wife **Nellie Soller**; his children and spouses **Don & Milette Poe, Erdie & Gina Tanjangco, Jewel & Kevin Nguyen, Jarie & Mary Faye Rodriguez** and **Carmela**; grandchildren **EJ, Mandi, Trixi, Lizzi, Fern, Chino, Miggy, Txabi, Montse, Sofie, Bernice, Garbrielle, Sasha & Yana**; brothers & sisters **Rody & Nancy, Baby & Sonny** (†) & **Jojo**; mother-in-law **Fely Soller**; relatives & friends join in prayer for his eternal repose in heaven.

His body lies at Mount Carmel Church, New Manila, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, April 2, 2006 after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio.

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EDR 3•26

ANTONIO C. DAYRIT, JR.

December 15, 1962 - March 26, 2006

His wife **Mabel Dionisia Comia**; children **Simon Gabriel** and **Juno Abel**; parents **Antonio** (†) and **Lily**; brothers and sisters **Bart, Cristina, Fran** and **Baby**; in-laws; nieces and nephews; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Mortuary of Sacred Heart Parish Church, Sct. Ybardolaza St., Kamuning, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Friday, March 31, 2006 at La Loma Cemetery after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Notice to the public of the expiration on December 31, 2005 of the marketing agency agreement with respect to the real property located at 74 EDSA, Mandaluyong City ("Property") between Sterling Products International Inc. and related entities, as principal, and Pronove Tai & Associates, as agent, is hereby made. From the said date, Pronove Tai & Associates has ceased to be authorized to offer the Property for sale.

(PDI - March 29 & 31, 2006)

February 14, 2006 NFA continues to stabilize rice supply and prices thru rice outlets nationwide

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY HAS accredited at least 26,112 individual rice retailers nationwide as of December last year, indicating another stable year for rice at the barangay level in 2006.

Of the total number of rice retailers, 11,379 individual retailers are located inside markets while the remaining 14,733 are outside markets.

The food agency, meanwhile, has deployed 236 units of NFA rolling stores to sell NFA rice, sugar and other grocery items at subsidized prices.

In 2005 alone, the NFA has sold a total of 747,758 bags of rice through these rolling stores.

NFA rolling stores are being deployed in depressed communities nationwide to sell affordable rice and other basic commodities to the country's poorest of the poor.

The NFA was also able to put up 76 stationary outlets in so-called 15 hotspot areas in Metro Manila as instructed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2005.

In addition to these outlets, the NFA has also established a total of 2,601 Bigasan ni Gloria sa Palengke outlets nationwide which exclusively sell NFA rice. A total of 7,282,591 bags of rice were sold throught these BGP outlets.

The NFA has also set up Tindahan Natin outlets in poverty-stricken areas in Metro Manila which sell rice at P18 per kilogram and fortified noodles at P4.25 per pack. This is being jointly implemented with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local government units.

The NFA will soon establish Tindahan Natin outlets nationwide.

For more information on NFA programs, the public may send their concerns via the Text NFA Program through mobile number 0917-6210927.

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PGMA AWARDS CERTIFICATE TO OPERATE TINDAHAN NATIN

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo hands to Maria Ikot , president of the Sambayanang Kristiano at Sitio Puting Bato in North Bay Boulevard South, Navotas the Certificate to Operate a Tindahan Natin outlet. One of the components of the 'Serbisyo Muna!', the Tindahan Natin will be established in depressed barangays nationwide to provide low-income families a permanent and reliable access to essential goods at discounted prices. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) determines the areas and operators of the Tindahan Natin which the NFA will accredit and supply with affordable rice to be sold at P18 per kg. With the President in photo are Congressman Ricky Sandoval of Navotas (left) and NFA Administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. (extreme right).

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(PDI - Mar. 29, 2006)

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More Classified Ads on pages A19, A30 & B10

REVISED IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS OF R.A. NO. 6957, "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE FINANCING, CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES", AS AMENDED BY R.A. NO. 7718

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Section 11 of R.A. No. 6957, as amended by R.A. No. 7718, the following Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations are hereby prescribed to carry out the provisions of said Act.

RULE 1 - PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

Section 1.1 - Policy

It is the declared policy of the State to recognize the indispensable role of the private sector as the main engine for national growth and development and provide the most appropriate incentives to mobilize private resources for the purpose of financing the Construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure and development projects normally financed and undertaken by the Government.

In line with the foregoing, these Revised IRR seek to identify specific incentives, support and undertakings, financial or otherwise, that may be granted to Project Proponents, provide a climate of minimum Government regulations, allow reasonable returns on investments made by Project Proponents, provide procedures that will assure transparency and competitiveness in the bidding and award of projects, ensure that Contractual Arrangements reflect appropriate sharing of risks between the Government and the Project Proponent, assure close coordination between national government and Local Government Units (LGUs), and ensure strict compliance by the Government and the Project Proponent of their respective obligations and undertakings and the monitoring thereof, in connection with or relative to Private Sector Infrastructure or Development Projects to be undertaken under this Act and these Revised IRR.

Section 1.2 - Coverage

These Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) shall cover all Private Sector Infrastructure or Development Projects, as hereunder defined, undertaken by Agencies/LGUs in accordance with such contractual arrangement or scheme authorized under and pursuant to R.A. No. 6957, as amended by R.A. No. 7718.

For LGU projects, concerned LGUs may formulate additional guidelines/procedures not in conflict with this Act and these Implementing Rules and Regulations and pertinent provisions of R.A. No. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991) and its implementing rules and regulations.

Section 1.3 - Definition of Terms

For purposes of these Implementing Rules and Regulations, the terms and phrases hereunder shall be understood as follows:

a. **Act** - shall mean Republic Act No. 6957, as amended by Republic Act No. 7718.

b. **Agency** - Refers to any department, bureau, office, commission, authority or agency of the national government, including Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations (GOCCs), Government Financial Institutions (GFIs), and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) authorized by law or their respective charters to contract for or undertake Infrastructure or Development Projects.

c. **Amortization** - The regular, periodic repayment of principal and payment of interest of a debt for a definite period of time, at the maturity of which the entire indebtedness is paid in full.

d. **Approving Body** - The entity authorized to approve projects proposed under this Act and in accordance with Sections 2.7 and 2.8 of these Revised IRR.

e. **BOT Center** - The successor of the Coordinating Council of the Philippine Assistance Program (CCPAP), the agency mandated under Section 12 of the Act, to coordinate and monitor projects implemented under the Act, pursuant to Administrative Order No. 67 (s. 1999), as amended by Administrative Order No. 103 (s. 2000) and Executive Order No. 144 (s. 2002).

f. **Contractual Arrangements** - Refers to any of the following contractual arrangements or schemes, as well as other variations thereof, as may be approved by the President, by which infrastructure and/or development projects may be undertaken pursuant to the provisions of these Revised IRR:

   i. **Build-and-transfer (BT)** - A contractual arrangement whereby the Project Proponent undertakes the financing and Construction of a given infrastructure or development facility and after its completion turns it over to the Agency or LGU concerned, which shall pay the Project Proponent on an agreed schedule its total investment expended on the project, plus a Reasonable Rate of Return thereon. This arrangement may be employed in the Construction of any Infrastructure or Development Projects, including critical facilities which, for security or strategic reasons, must be operated directly by the Government.

   ii. **Build-lease-and-transfer (BLT)** - A contractual arrangement whereby a Project Proponent is authorized to finance and construct an infrastructure or development facility and upon its completion turns it over to the Agency/LGU concerned on a lease arrangement for a fixed period, after which ownership of the facility is automatically transferred to the Agency/LGU concerned.

   iii. **Build-operate-and-transfer (BOT)** - A contractual arrangement whereby the Project Proponent undertakes the Construction, including financing, of a given infrastructure facility, and the operation and maintenance thereof. The Project Proponent operates the facility over a fixed term during which it is allowed to charge facility users appropriate tolls, fees, rentals, and charges not exceeding those proposed in its bid or as negotiated and incorporated in the contract to enable the Project Proponent to recover its investment, and operating and maintenance expenses in the project. The Project Proponent transfers the facility to the Agency/LGU concerned at the end of the fixed term that shall not exceed fifty (50) years. This build-operate-and-transfer contractual arrangement shall include a supply-and-operate scheme which is a contractual arrangement whereby the supplier of equipment and machinery for a given infrastructure facility, if the interest of the Government so requires, operates the facility providing in the process technology transfer and training to Filipino nationals.

   iv. **Build-own-and-operate (BOO)** - A contractual arrangement whereby a Project Proponent is authorized to finance, construct, own, operate and maintain an infrastructure or development facility from which the Project Proponent is allowed to recover its total investment, operating and maintenance costs plus a reasonable return thereon by collecting tolls, fees, rentals or other charges from facility users; provided, That all such projects upon recommendation of the Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), shall be approved by the President of the Philippines. Under this project, the proponent who owns the assets of the facility may assign its operation and maintenance to a Facility operator.

   v. **Build-transfer-and-operate (BTO)** - A contractual arrangement whereby the Agency/LGU contracts out the Construction of an infrastructure facility to a private entity such that the Contractor builds the facility on a turnkey basis, assuming cost overruns, delays, and specified performance risks. Once the facility is commissioned satisfactorily, title is transferred to the implementing Agency/LGU. The private entity however operates the facility on behalf of the implementing Agency/LGU under an agreement.

   vi. **Contract-add-and-operate (CAO)** - A contractual arrangement whereby the Project Proponent adds to an existing infrastructure facility which it is renting from the Government and operates the expanded project over an agreed Franchise period. There may or may not be a transfer arrangement with regard to the added facility provided by the Project Proponent.

   vii. **Develop-operate-and-transfer (DOT)** - A contractual arrangement whereby favorable conditions external to a new infrastructure project which is to be built by a Project Proponent are integrated into the arrangement by giving that entity the right to develop adjoining property, and thus, enjoy some of the benefits the investment creates such as higher property or rent values.

   viii. **Rehabilitate-operate-and-transfer (ROT)** - A contractual arrangement whereby an existing facility is turned over to the Project Proponent to refurbish, operate and maintain for a Franchise period, at the expiry of which the legal title to the facility is turned over to the Government. The term is also used to describe the purchase of an existing facility from abroad, importing, refurbishing, erecting and consuming it within the host country.

   ix. **Rehabilitate-own-and-operate (ROO)** - A contractual arrangement whereby an existing facility is turned over to the Project Proponent to refurbish and operate with no time limitation imposed on ownership. As long as the operator is not in violation of its Franchise, it can continue to operate the facility in perpetuity.

g. **Construction** - Refers to new construction, rehabilitation, improvement, expansion, alteration, and related works and activities including the necessary design, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of equipment, systems, plants, materials, labor and services and related items needed to build or rehabilitate an infrastructure or development facility.

h. **Contractor** - Refers to any entity accredited under Philippine laws, or that should be accredited under Philippine laws in accordance with Section 5.4 (a.v) hereof, which may or may not be the Project Proponent and which shall undertake the actual Construction and/or supply of equipment for the project.

i. **Development Program** - Refers to national, regional or local government plans or programs included in, but not limited to, the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), the Regional Development Plans and Local Development Plans.

j. **Direct Government Guarantee** - Refers to an agreement whereby the Government or any of its Agencies/LGUs guarantees to assume responsibility for the repayment of debt directly incurred by the Project Proponent in implementing the project in case of a loan default.

k. **Facility Operator** - Refers to a company registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which may or may not be the Project Proponent, and which is responsible for all aspects of operation and maintenance of the infrastructure or development facility, including but not limited to the collection of tolls, fees, rentals or charges from facility users; provided, that in case the facility requires a public utility Franchise, the Facility Operator shall, no later than the commencement of operation of the facility, comply with the nationality and ownership requirements under the Constitution and other applicable laws and jurisprudence.

l. **Franchise** - Refers to a certificate, permit or other form of authorization required to be obtained by a Facility Operator from a Regulator prior to operating a Public Utility Project.

m. **Government Undertakings** - Refers to any form of contribution and/or support provided under Section 13.3 of these Revised IRR, which the Government or any of its Agencies/LGUs may extend to a Project Proponent.

n. **Head of Agency/LGU** - Shall be defined as: (i) the head of the agency or body, for national government agencies (NGAs) and the constitutional commissions or offices, and branches of government; (ii) the Governing Board or its authorized official/managing head/Chief Executive Officer of GOCCs, GFIs, or SUCs; or (iii) the Sanggunian or its authorized official or the local chief executive, for LGUs.

o. **ICC** - Refers to the Investment Coordination Committee of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board.

p. **Investment Incentives** - Refers to any form of contribution and/or support, which the Government or any of its Agencies/LGUs including GOCCs may extend to the Project Proponent in accordance with Section 13.2 of these Revised IRR.

q. **IRR** - Shall mean these Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations.

r. **List of Priority Projects** - Refers to the list of Private Sector Infrastructure or Development Projects approved in accordance with Section 2.3.

s. **Local Government Units (LGUs)** - Refer to provincial, city, municipal and/or barangay government entities.

t. **Negotiated Contracts** - Refers to contracts entered into by the Government for convenience even if broader tendering would have been possible. This type of contract may be resorted to only in cases prescribed under Rule 9.

u. **PBAC** - Refers to the Pre-qualifications, Bids, and Awards Committee established in accordance with Rule 3 of these Revised IRR.

v. **Private Sector Infrastructure or Development Projects** - The general description of Infrastructure or Development Projects normally financed, and operated by the public sector but which will now be wholly or partly financed, constructed and operated by the private sector, including but not limited to, power plants, highways, ports, airports, canals, dams, hydropower projects, water supply, irrigation, telecommunications, railroad and railways, transport systems, land reclamation projects, industrial estates or townships, housing, government buildings, tourism projects, public markets, slaughterhouses, warehouses, solid waste management, information technology networks and database infrastructure, education and health facilities, sewerage, drainage, dredging, and other infrastructure and development projects as may otherwise be authorized by the appropriate Agency/LGU pursuant to the Act or these Revised IRR. Such projects shall be undertaken through Contractual Arrangements as defined herein, including such other variations as may be approved by the President of the Philippines.

w. **Project Cost** - Refers to the total cost to be expended by the proponent to plan, develop and construct the project to completion stage including but not limited to cost of feasibility studies engineering and design, Construction, equipment, land and right-of-way, taxes imposed on said cost, and development cost.

x. **Project Loan** - Refers to all loans and/or credit facilities extended by financial institutions, multi-lateral lenders, export credit agencies, and all other third party lenders to the project company and/or Project Proponent for the development and/or operation of the project.

Foreign loans/foreign currency loans to be incurred by the project company shall be in accordance with prevailing *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP) regulations.

y. **Project Proponent** - Refers to the private sector entity which shall have contractual responsibility for the project and which shall have an adequate track record in the concerned industry as well as technical capability and financial base consisting of equity and firm commitments from reputable financial institutions to provide, upon award, sufficient credit lines to cover the total estimated cost of the project to implement the said project.

z. **Public Utility Projects** - Refers to projects or facilities that provide public services as defined under the Public Services Act, as amended, and for which a Franchise is required.

a.a. **Reasonable Rate of Return** - Refers to the rate of return that a Project Proponent shall be entitled to, as determined by the Approving Body taking into account, among others, the prevailing cost of capital (equity and borrowings) in the domestic and international markets, risks being assumed by the Project Proponent and the level of Government Undertakings extended for the project; provided, further, that in the case of Negotiated Contracts, such rate of return shall be determined by the Approving Body prior to call for proposals; provided further, that for Negotiated Contracts for public utilities projects which are monopolies, the rate of return on rate base shall be determined by existing laws, which in no case shall exceed twelve per centum (12%), as provided by the Act.

b.b. **Regulator** - Refers to the agency, body or commission empowered by law to fix the rates of a provider of a particular public service as defined by the Commonwealth Act No. 146, as amended (Public Service Act, as amended) and for which a Franchise is required to operate the same.

c.c. **Unsolicited Proposals** - Refer to project proposals submitted by the private sector, not in response to a formal solicitation or request issued by an Agency/LGU, to undertake Infrastructure or Development Projects which may be entered into by Agency/LGU subject to the requirements/conditions prescribed under Rule 10.

RULE 2 - GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 2.1 - Authorized Contracting Government Agencies/Units

The following are authorized to enter into Contractual Arrangements under this Act and these Revised IRR:

a. All concerned departments, bureaus, offices, commissions, authorities, or agencies of the national government, including GOCCs, GFIs, SUCs, and LGUs authorized by law or by their respective charters to undertake Infrastructure or Development projects.

Section 2.2 - Eligible Types of Projects

The Construction, rehabilitation, improvement, betterment, expansion, modernization, operation, financing and maintenance of the following types of projects which are normally financed and operated by the public sector which will now be wholly or partly financed, constructed and operated by the private sector, including other infrastructure and development projects as may be authorized by the appropriate agencies, may be proposed under the provisions of the Act and these Revised IRR, provided however that such projects have a cost recovery component which covers at least 50% of the Project Cost, or as determined by the Approving Body:

a. Highways, including expressway, roads, bridges, interchanges, tunnels, and related facilities;

b. Railways or rail-based projects packaged with commercial development opportunities;

c. Non-rail based mass transit facilities, navigable inland waterways and related facilities;

d. Port infrastructures like piers, wharves, quays, storage, handling, ferry services and related facilities;

e. Airports, air navigation, and related facilities;

f. Power generation, transmission, sub-transmission, distribution, and related facilities;

g. Telecommunications, backbone network, terrestrial and satellite facilities and related service facilities;

h. Information technology (IT) and data base infrastructure, including modernization of IT, geo-spatial resource mapping and cadastral survey for resource accounting and planning;

i. Irrigation and related facilities;

j. Water supply, sewerage, drainage, and related facilities;

k. Education and health infrastructure;

l. Land reclamation, dredging and other related development facilities;

m. Industrial and tourism estates or townships, including related infrastructure facilities and utilities;

n. Government buildings, housing projects;

o. Markets, slaughterhouses, and related facilities;

p. Warehouses and post-harvest facilities;

q. Public fish ports and fishponds, including storage and processing facilities; and

r. Environmental and solid waste management related facilities such as but not limited to collection equipment, composting plants, landfill and tidal barriers, among others.

Section 2.3 - List of Priority Projects

Concerned Agencies/LGUs are tasked to prepare their infrastructure or development programs and to identify specific priority projects that may be financed, constructed, operated and maintained by the private sector through the Contractual Arrangements or schemes authorized under these Revised IRR and to submit for the approval by the Approving Body, as specified in Section 2.7. Priority projects shall include but not be limited to those identified in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Programs (MTPDP), Medium-Term Public Investment Programs (MTPIP), Regional Development Programs (RDPs), Regional Development Investment Programs (RDIPs) as well as specific LGU development plans.

Section 2.4 - Publication and Notice

All Agencies/LGUs shall provide wide publicity of the List of Priority Projects proposed for implementation under the Contractual Arrangements or schemes as authorized under the Act and these Revised IRR to keep interested/concerned parties informed thereof. For this purpose, all Agencies/LGUs shall cause their respective List of Priority Projects to be published at least once every six (6) months in a national newspaper of general circulation, and where applicable, international newspapers of general circulation. Said List should also be posted continuously in the website of the concerned Agency/LGU, if available.

Section 2.5 - Registration of Project Proponents

Project Proponents may register with the Agency/LGU, indicating which projects are of interest to them, and for this purpose, submit their company profiles in the form prescribed in the ICC Guidelines. Duly registered Project Proponents shall be officially notified and furnished by the Agency/LGU a copy of the list of their respective priority projects and corresponding project updates at least once every six (6) months.

Section 2.6 - Allowable Modes of Implementation

Projects may be implemented through public bidding or direct negotiation. The direct negotiation mode is subject to conditions specified in Rules 9 and 10 hereof.

Section 2.7 - Approval of Priority Projects

The approval of projects proposed under this Act shall be in accordance with the following:

a. **National Projects** - The projects must be part of the Agency's development programs, and shall be approved as follows:

   i. projects costing up to PhP 300 million, shall be submitted to ICC for approval;

   ii. projects costing more than PhP 300 million, shall be submitted to the NEDA Board for approval upon the recommendation of ICC; and

   iii. regardless of amount, negotiated projects shall be submitted to the NEDA Board for approval upon recommendation by the ICC.

b. **Local Projects** - Local projects to be implemented by the LGUs shall be submitted by the concerned LGU for confirmation, as follows:

   i. to the municipal development council for projects costing up to PhP 20 million;

   ii. to the provincial development council for those costing above PhP 20 million up to PhP 50 million;

   iii. to the city development council for those costing up to PhP 50 million;

   iv. to the regional development council or, in the case of Metro Manila projects, the Regional Development Council for Metropolitan Manila, for those costing above PhP 50 million up to PhP 200 million, and

   v. to the ICC for those costing above PhP 200 million.

   Final approval of projects classified under b.i to b.iv of this section is vested on the Local Sanggunians per provision of the Local Government Code.

Section 2.8 - Detailed Guidelines for the Approval of Projects/Contracts

The Approving Body shall, from time to time, prescribe or revise detailed guidelines on the process and procedures for the approval of projects and contracts as well as the requirements to be submitted in support thereof, provided that the same are consistent with the Act and these Revised IRR.

Section 2.9 - Policy on Deviations from Approved Contract

The Agency/LGU shall not proceed with the award and signing of the contract with the Project Proponent if there are material deviations from the parameters and terms and conditions set forth in the draft contract as approved by the Approving Body. The Head of the Agency/LGU shall be responsible for compliance with this policy and violation of this Section 2.9 shall render the award and/or the signed contract invalid.

Section 2.10 - Presidential Approval, When Required

Projects undertaken through the BOO scheme or through Contractual Arrangements or schemes other than those defined under Section 1.3 (f) of these Revised IRR shall require Presidential approval. For this purpose, the Head of Agency/LGU shall submit the proposed project to the NEDA Board through the ICC, which shall evaluate the proposal and forward its recommendations to the President. However, such projects shall be deemed to have been approved by the President when approved at a NEDA Board meeting presided over by the President.

Section 2.11 - Deadline for Approval of Solicited Projects/Contracts

The Approving Body shall act on the project and the contract within thirty (30) calendar days upon satisfactory compliance by the concerned Agency/LGU with the requirements of the Approving Body. Failure of the Approving Body to act on the project and contract within the specified period shall be deemed an approval thereof and the concerned Agency/LGU may proceed with the solicitation of proposals. Such approval, however, shall be valid only for a period of eighteen (18) months from the issuance of the approval unless the invitation to pre-qualify and to bid has been issued; provided, that the Approving Body shall issue a written notice of approval or disapproval upon the written request for extension by the Agency/LGU, which must be filed within eighteen (18) months from the issuance of such approval.

RULE 3 - THE BOT PRE-QUALIFICATION, BIDS, AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Section 3.1 - Composition

The Head of the Agency/LGU shall create a BOT Pre-qualification, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC) composed of the following:

a. At least a third ranking regular official of the Agency/LGU - Chairman

b. A legal officer - Member-Secretary

c. One (1) technical officer knowledgeable with the technical aspects or requirements of the project, duly designated by the Head of Agency/LGU concerned on a project-to-project basis - Member (provisional)

d. One (1) technical officer knowledgeable with aspects or requirements of the project from a concerned regulatory body, when applicable, to be invited by the Agency/LGU concerned on a project-to-project basis. - Member (provisional and non-voting)

e. An officer knowledgeable in finance - Member

f. An officer knowledgeable in management/operation of the project - Member

g. Two (2) representatives from the private sector: one from duly recognized Contractors associations, and the other from either the facility users, or duly recognized accounting associations. - Observers (non-voting)

h. A representative from the Commission on Audit - Observer (non-voting)

i. One (1) representative from the BOT Center for national projects, in accordance with Section 2.7 (a) - Observer (non-voting)

j. One (1) representative from the local DILG office, for LGU projects - Observer (non-voting)

Observers will be notified at least two (2) calendar days before the following stages: pre-bid conference, opening of bids, evaluation of bids, contract award, and special meetings of the PBAC. The absence of observers will not nullify the PBAC proceedings, provided that they have been duly invited in writing.

Section 3.2 - Responsibility of the PBAC

The PBAC herein created shall be responsible for all aspects of the pre-bidding and bidding process in the case of solicited proposals, and for the comparative bidding process (otherwise known as the "Swiss Challenge"), in the case of Unsolicited Proposals, including, among others, the preparation of the bidding/tender documents, publication of the invitation to pre-qualify and bid, pre-qualification of prospective bidders, conduct of pre-bid conferences and issuance of supplemental notices, interpretation of the rules regarding the bidding, the conduct of bidding, evaluation of bids, resolution of disputes between bidders, and recommendation for the acceptance of the bid and/or for the award of the project.

Section 3.3 - Quorum

A quorum of the PBAC shall be composed of a simple majority of all voting members of the Committee. The Chairman shall vote only in case of a tie.

RULE 4 - BID/TENDER DOCUMENTS

Section 4.1 - Bid/Tender Documents

The Agency/LGU concerned shall prepare the bid/tender documents, which shall include the following:

a. "Instructions to Bidders";

b. "Minimum Design, Performance Standards/Specifications, and Economic Parameters" such as discount rate, inflation factor and foreign exchange rate, where applicable, among others;

c. "Draft Contract" (as approved in accordance with Section 2.8) reflecting the contractual arrangement under which the project shall be undertaken, and the respective undertakings of the contracting parties, among others;

d. "Bid Form" reflecting the required information to properly evaluate the bid proposal;

e. forms of bid and performance securities;

f. current applicable rules and regulations of the BSP; and

g. other documents as may be deemed necessary by the Agency/LGU concerned.

Section 4.2 - Instructions to Bidders

The instructions to bidders, which establish the rules of the bidding, shall be clear, comprehensive and fair to all bidders and shall, as far as necessary and practicable, include the following information:

a. General description and objectives of the project, including a statement that the project shall be proposed under Republic Act No. 6957, as amended by Republic Act No. 7718 and these Revised IRR;

b. Contractual arrangement under which the project shall be undertaken;

c. Bid submission procedures and requirements, which shall include information on the manner of bid submission, the number of copies of bid proposal to be submitted, where the bids are to be submitted, the deadline for the submission of bids, permissible mode of transmission of bid proposals, etc.;

d. Investment Incentives and Government Undertakings under Rule 13;

e. Bid security and bid security validity period;

f. Milestones;

g. Method and criteria for the evaluation of the technical component of the bids;

h. Parameters and criteria for evaluation of financial component of the bids;

   Any one or more of the following criteria may be used in the evaluation of the financial component of the bid for determining the most advantageous bid for the Government:

   i. Lowest proposed toll, fee, rental or charge at the start of project operation, if a pre-agreed parametric tariff adjustment formula is prescribed in the bid document;

   ii. Lowest present value of proposed tolls, fees, rentals and other charges for the period covered by the contract;

   iii. Lowest present value of government subsidy to be provided for the period covered by the contract;

   iv. Highest present value of proposed payments to Government, such as: concession fees, lease/rental payments, fixed/guaranteed payments, and/or variable payments/percentage shares of revenue for the period covered by the contract; or

   v. Any other appropriate financial bid parameter as may be approved by the Approving Body.

i. Minimum amount of equity as prescribed by the Approving Body.

j. Formula and appropriate indices to be used in the adjustments of tolls/fees/rentals/charges, when applicable. Said formula shall take into account the reasonableness of the same to users of the project/facility under bidding;

k. Requirements of concerned regulatory bodies, such as, but not limited to: the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), for the issuance of an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC); National Water Resources Board (NWRB), for the issuance of the Water Permit; the PCAB, for the registration requirements of Contractors; and, the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), for the review of toll rates and adjustment formula for Negotiated Contracts.

l. Current rules and regulations of the BSP;

m. Revenue sharing arrangements, if any;

n. Expected commissioning date; and

o. Nationality and ownership requirements as, required by law.

Section 4.3 - Minimum Designs, Performance Standards/ Specifications and Economic Parameters

Minimum design and performance standards/specifications, including appropriate environmental standards as prescribed by the DENR, shall be clearly defined and shall refer more to the desired quantity and quality of the outputs of the facility and should state that non-conformity with any of these minimum requirements shall render the bids as non-responsive. Likewise, for the purpose of evaluating bids, the following economic parameters, among others, shall be prescribed:

a. Discount rate, foreign exchange rate and inflation factor as prescribed by the Approving Body.

b. Maximum period of project Construction.

c. Fixed term for project operation and collection of the proposed tolls/fees/rentals/charges, if applicable.

d. Formula and price indices to be used in the adjustments of tolls/fees/rentals/charges, if applicable.

e. Minimum period of repayment, if applicable.

f. Revenue Share of the Implementing Agency/LGU, if applicable.

g. Minimum amount of equity as prescribed by the Approving Body; and

h. Current rules and regulations of the BSP.

Section 4.4 - Draft Contract

The draft contract should clearly define the basic and legal relationship between the parties and their rights and responsibilities including the specific Government Undertakings to be provided by the Agency/LGU relative to the project. The draft contract shall be the draft approved by the Approving Body and shall have the following mandatory terms or conditions:

a. specific contractual arrangement, term, and scope of work;

b. project technical specifications and system features;

c. implementation milestones including those for securing other approvals, project completion date;

d. cost recovery scheme via proposed tolls, fees, rentals and charges, as the case may be;

e. liquidated damages as contemplated under Section 12.14;

f. performance and warranty bonds contemplated under Sections 12.8 and 12.9;

g. minimum insurance coverage as follows: Contractors' all risk, motor vehicle, workmen's compensation, and third party liability for the project including comprehensive general liability insurance;

h. acceptance tests and procedures;

i. warranty period and procedures (after transfer);

j. grounds for and effects of contract termination including modes for settling disputes;

k. the manner and procedures for the resolution of warranty against corruption, and

l. compliance with all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

RULE 5 - QUALIFICATION OF BIDDERS

Section 5.1 - Who May Participate

Any individual, partnership, corporation or firm, whether local or foreign, including joint venture or consortia of local, foreign or local and foreign firms, subject to the limits herein set, may participate or apply for pre- or simultaneous qualification for projects covered under the provisions of the Act and these Revised IRR.

Section 5.2 - Publication of Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid

The Head of the Agency/LGU concerned shall, after obtaining approval for the project and the contract, forthwith cause to be published, once every week for three (3) consecutive weeks, in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation and in at least one (1) local newspaper of general circulation in the region, province, city or municipality in which the projects are to be implemented, a notice inviting all prospective infrastructure or development Project Proponents to pre-qualify and bid for the projects so approved. Said invitation should also be posted continuously in the website of the Agency/LGU concerned, if available, during the period stated above. For projects costing at least US$ 10 million, the invitation may also be published in at least one (1) international publication. Likewise, the Agency/LGU concerned shall issue official notification of the same to Project Proponents registered with them.

The published Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid shall contain information, among others, whether the Contractor to be employed to undertake the Construction works needs to be pre-identified for pre-qualification purposes or not.

Section 5.3 - Period to Prepare Pre-qualification Documents

The Agency/LGU concerned shall allow prospective bidders at least thirty (30) calendar days from the last date of publication of the Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid to prepare their respective pre-qualification documents. For projects costing at least PhP 300 million, the period of preparation shall at least be forty-five (45) calendar days from the last date of publication of the Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid. In any event, the deadline for submission of pre-qualification statements shall be indicated in the published Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid.

Section 5.4 - Pre-qualification Requirements

To pre-qualify, a prospective Project Proponent must comply with the following requirements:

a. Legal Requirements

   i. For projects to be implemented under the BOT scheme whose operations require a public utility Franchise, the prospective Project Proponent and the Facility Operator must be Filipinos or, if corporations, must be duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and owned up to at least sixty percent (60%) by Filipinos. For projects other than these, the prospective Project Proponent shall comply with the nationality and ownership requirements under the Constitution and other applicable laws.

   ii. For projects to be implemented through a scheme other than the BOT and requiring a public utility Franchise, the Facility Operator must be a Filipino or, if a corporation, must be duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and owned up to at least sixty percent (60%) by Filipinos.

   Consistent with existing laws, the Project Proponent may be the operator but it may be allowed to enter into a management contract with another entity, who may be 100% foreign owned, for the day to day operation of the facility, provided that the Project Proponent will assume all attendant liabilities of the operator.

   iii. In case the prospective Project Proponent is a joint venture or consortium, the members or participants thereof shall already be disclosed during the pre-qualification stage and shall undergo pre-qualification. Further, the members or participants thereof shall execute an undertaking in favor of the Agency/LGU that if awarded the contract, they shall bind themselves to be jointly and severally liable for the obligations of the Project Proponent under the contract.

   However, if members of the joint venture or consortium organize themselves as a corporation registered under Philippine laws, such corporation shall execute such an undertaking binding

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itself to be liable for the obligations of the Project Proponent under the contract, which shall substitute or be in lieu of the undertaking submitted by the members or participants of the joint venture or consortium.

iv. For projects to be operated by the Project Proponent itself or owned by the Project Proponent but operated through a Facility Operator where operation of the facility does not require a public utility Franchise, the Project Proponent or the Facility Operator may be Filipino or foreign-owned.

v. For purposes of pre-qualification, the Contractor proposed to be engaged by the Project Proponent to undertake the Construction of the project must be duly licensed and accredited by the PCAB. In the case of a Filipino Contractor, or by an equivalent accreditation institution in the Contractor's country of origin, in the case of a foreign Contractor. Once the Project Proponent is awarded the project, such foreign Contractor must secure a license and accreditation from the PCAB.

b. Experience or Track Record - The prospective Project Proponent must possess adequate experience in terms of the following:

i. Firm Experience - By itself or through the member-firms in case of a joint venture/consortium or through a Contractor(s) which the prospective Project Proponent may have engaged for the project, the prospective Project Proponent and/or its Contractor(s) must have successfully undertaken a project(s) similar or related to the subject infrastructure/development project to be bid. The individual firms and/or their Contractor(s) may individually specialize on any or several phases of the project(s). A joint venture/consortium proponent shall be evaluated based on the individual or collective experience of the member-firms of the joint venture/consortium and of the Contractor(s) that it has engaged for the project.

For purposes of the above, joint ventures/consortia shall submit as part of their pre-qualification statement a business plan which shall, among others, identify their members and their Contractor(s), if the experience of their Contractor(s) are necessary for the determination of the capacity of the joint venture/consortium to undertake the project and the description of the respective roles said members and Contractors, if necessary, shall play or undertake in the project. If undecided on a specific Contractor, the prospective Project Proponent may submit a short list of Contractors from among which it will select the final Contractor. Short listed Contractors are required to submit a statement indicating willingness to participate in the project and capacity to undertake the requirements of the project. The business plan shall disclose which of the members of the joint venture/consortium shall be the lead member the financing arm, and/or Facility Operator(s), and the Contractor(s) if required to be pre-identified as prescribed in the published Invitation to Pre-qualify and Bid or if the qualifications/experience of their Contractor(s) are necessary for the determination of the capacity of the joint venture/consortium to undertake the project.

ii. Key Personnel Experience - The key personnel of the prospective Project Proponent and/or its Contractor(s) must have sufficient experience in the relevant aspect of schemes similar or related to the subject project, as specified by the Agency/LGU.

c. Financial Capability - The prospective Project Proponent must have adequate capability to sustain the financing requirements for the detailed engineering design, Construction and/or operation and maintenance phases of the project, as the case may be.

The Agency/LGU concerned shall determine on a project-to-project basis, and before pre-qualification, the minimum amount of equity needed. In addition, the Agency/LGU will inform the proponents of the minimum debt-equity ratio required by the BSP for projects to be financed by foreign loans.

For purposes of pre-qualification, this capability shall be measured in terms of proof of the ability of the prospective Project Proponent and/or the consortium to provide:

i. Equity

(a) a minimum amount of equity to the project measured in terms of the net worth of the company, or in the case of joint ventures or consortia, the combined net worth of members, or

(b) a set-aside deposit equivalent to the minimum equity required

ii. Debt

A letter testimonial from a domestic universal/commercial bank or an international bank with a subsidiary/branch in the Philippines or any international bank recognized by the BSP attesting that the prospective Project Proponent and/or members of the consortium are banking with them, and that they are in good financial standing and/or are qualified to obtain credit accommodations from such banks to finance the project.

The Agency/LGU, through its PBAC, shall complete the evaluation of the pre-qualification documents of the prospective Project Proponents within thirty (30) calendar days.

Section 5.5 - Pre-qualified and Disqualified Proponents

The Agency/LGU, through its PBAC, shall, within a period of thirty (30) calendar days after the deadline set for the submission of the pre-qualification documents, determine which among prospective proponents are "pre-qualified" or "disqualified". Accordingly, the PBAC shall duly inform the prospective Project Proponents who have been pre-qualified within seven (7) calendar days after approval thereof. Disqualified proponents shall likewise be informed stating therein the grounds for their disqualification within the same period. Those disqualified may appeal the disqualification within fifteen (15) working days from receipt of the notice of disqualification to the Head of Agency in the case of national projects, or the Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative, in the case of local projects.

The bidding process will be suspended while the appeal is being evaluated. The Head of Agency or Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative, as the case may be, shall act on the appeal within forty-five (45) working days from receipt of the appeal and upon filing of a non-refundable appeal fee in an amount equivalent to no less than one-half of one percent (0.5%) of the Project Cost as approved by the Approving Body. The decision of the Head of Agency of Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative on the appeal shall be final and immediately executory.

Section 5.6 - Issuance of Tender Documents

The Agency/LGU concerned shall make available the related bid documents to all pre-qualified bidders as soon as practicable to provide respective bidders ample time to examine the same and to prepare their respective bids prior to the date of opening of bids.

Section 5.7 - Simultaneous Qualification

In the exigency of service, the Agency/LGU Head may opt to do a simultaneous qualification instead of a pre-qualification of proponents. In case of simultaneous qualification, the publication of the invitation, following the requirements in Section 5.2, shall be for the submission of qualification requirements and bid proposals. The bidders shall be asked to submit their proposal in three envelopes; the first envelope - the qualification documents corresponding to the requirements so stated in Section 5.4 herein, the second envelope - the technical proposal; and the third envelope - the financial proposal. The requirements for bid submission are covered under Rule 7 of these Revised IRR The period for the preparation of the qualification documents shall be subsumed under the time allotted for bid preparation.

Section 5.8 - Acceptance of Criteria and Waiver of Rights to Enjoin Project

All prospective bidders shall be required to submit, as part of their qualification documents, a statement stipulating that the bidder (i) has accepted the qualification criteria established by the PBAC of the Agency/LGU concerned, and (ii) waives any right it may have to seek and obtain a writ of injunction or prohibition or restraining order against the concerned Agency/LGU or its PBAC to prevent or restrain the qualification process or any proceedings related thereto, the holding of a bidding or any proceedings related thereto, the negotiation of and award of the contract to a successful bidder, and the carrying out of the awarded contract. Such waiver shall, however, be without prejudice to the right of a disqualified or losing bidder to question the lawfulness of its disqualification or the rejection of its bid by appropriate administrative or judicial processes not involving the issuance of a writ of injunction or prohibition or restraining order.

RULE 6 - SUPPLEMENTAL NOTICES AND PRE-BID CONFERENCES

Section 6.1 - Responsibility of Bidder

The prospective bidder shall be solely responsible for having taken all the necessary steps to carefully examine and acquaint himself with the requirements and terms and conditions of the bidding documents with respect to the cost, duration, and execution/operation of the project as it affects the preparation and submission of his bid. The Agency/LGU concerned shall not assume any responsibility regarding erroneous interpretations or conclusions by the prospective bidder out of data furnished or indicated in the bidding documents.

Section 6.2 - Supplemental Notices

If a bidder is in doubt as to the meaning of any data or requirements or any part of the bidding documents, written request may be submitted to the Agency/LGU concerned for an interpretation of the same, allowing sufficient time for the concerned Agency/LGU to reply before the submission of his/her bid. Any substantive interpretation given by the concerned Agency/LGU shall be issued in the form of a Supplemental Notice, and furnished to all prospective bidders. The Agency/LGU concerned may also issue Supplemental Notices to all prospective bidders at any time for purposes of clarifying any provisions of the bidding documents provided that the same is issued within a reasonable period to allow all bidders to consider the same in the preparation of their bids Receipt of all Supplemental Notices shall be duly acknowledged by each bidder prior to the submission of his bid and shall be so indicated in the bid.

Section 6.3 - Pre-Bid Conference

For projects costing less than PhP 300 million, a pre-bid conference shall also be conducted by the concerned Agency/LGU at least thirty (30) calendar days before the deadline for the submission of bids to clarify any provisions, requirements and/or terms and conditions of the bidding documents and/or any other matter that the prospective bidders may raise. For projects costing PhP 300 million and above, the pre-bid conference shall be conducted sixty (60) to one hundred twenty (120) calendar days before the submission of bids.

Nothing stated at the pre-bid conference shall modify any provisions or terms and conditions of the bidding documents unless such is made as a written amendment thereto by the concerned Agency/LGU. Any amendments shall be issued by the Agency/LGU concerned to all bidders within a reasonable time to allow them to consider the same in the preparation of their bids and shall be duly acknowledged by each bidder prior to the submission of his bid and shall be so indicated in his bid. A summary of the pre-bid conference proceedings shall also be issued to all prospective bidders by the Agency/LGU concerned. Attendance to the pre-bid conference by prospective bidders shall not be mandatory.

RULE 7 - SUBMISSION, RECEIPT AND OPENING OF BIDS

Section 7.1 - Requirements for Bid Submission

Bidders shall be required to submit their bids on or before the deadline stipulated in the "Instructions to Bidders". For pre-qualified bidders, their bids shall be submitted in two (2) separate sealed envelopes, the first being the technical proposal and the second the financial proposal. In case of simultaneous qualification, three (3) envelopes shall be submitted. The first envelope shall be the qualification requirements, the second the technical proposal and the third the financial proposal. All envelopes shall bear the name of the bidder and project to be bid out in capital letters and addressed to the PBAC of the concerned Agency/LGU. They shall be marked "Do Not Open Before (date and time of opening of bids)". The envelopes shall be appropriately labeled as Qualification Requirements, Technical Proposal and Financial Proposal

a. The "Qualification Requirements" shall contain requirements as stated in Section 5.4

b. The "Technical Proposal" shall contain the following:

i. Compliance statements with regard to the contractual arrangement and term and scope of work, project technical specifications, system features, implementation milestones including project completion date, acceptance tests and procedures, warranty period and procedures (after transfer), and other technical parameters as stated in the tender documents.

ii. Operational feasibility of the project, which shall indicate the proposed organization, methods, and procedures for the operation and maintenance of the project under bidding;

iii. Technical soundness/preliminary engineering design, including proposed project timeline;

iv. Preliminary environmental assessment, which shall indicate the probable adverse effects of the project on the environment and the corresponding mitigating measures to be adopted;

v. Project Cost;

vi. Bid security in the form of cash, certified check, manager's check, letter of credit, or bank draft/guarantee issued by a reputable local/foreign bank, or a surety bond callable on demand issued by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) or an entity duly registered and recognized by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner and acceptable to the Agency/LGU, or any combination thereof payable to the Agency/LGU concerned based on the total Project Cost (as indicated by the prospective Project Proponent) in accordance with the following schedules:

PROJECT COST (as estimated by the Agency/LGU or proposed by the Project Proponent)	REQUIRED BID SECURITY
Less than PhP 5.0 billion	2.0% of the Project Cost
less than PhP 5.0 billion to less than PhP 10.0 billion	1.5% of the Project Cost or PhP 100 million, whichever is higher
PhP 10.0 billion and more	1.0% of the Project Cost or PhP 150 million, whichever is higher

In case the bid security is issued by an international bank, said security has to be confirmed and validated by its local branch in the Philippines or by a bank that is duly registered and authorized by the BSP.

The posting of the bid security is for the purpose of guaranteeing that the proposed contract awardee shall enter into contract with the concerned Agency within the time prescribed therefor.

Bids and bid securities shall be valid for a period to be prescribed by the Agency/LGU concerned in the bidding documents but in no case beyond one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days from the date of opening of bids, subject to Section 11.6. The actual amount of bid security to be posted by the bidders will be fixed by the concerned Agency/LGU prior to bidding. Said actual amount shall not be less than the amount prescribed in the above schedule.

vii. Other documents as may be required by the concerned Agency/LGU to support the bidder's technical proposal.

c. The "Financial Proposal" shall contain the following, as the case may be:

i. Compliance statements with regard to the financial parameters stated in the tender documents, which may include those on liquidated damages as contemplated under Section 12.13, performance and warranty bonds contemplated under Sections 12.7 and 12.8, insurance cover for the project including comprehensive general liability insurance, acceptance tests and procedures, and warranty period and procedures (after transfer);

ii. Proposed Project Cost, operation and maintenance cost, project financing scheme including the amount of equity to be infused and debt to be obtained for the project, sources of financing, and all other related costs; and

iii. Financial bid corresponding to the parameters set by the Agency/LGU in accordance with Section 4.2 (h).

Section 7.2 - Submission of Late Bids

Bids submitted after the deadline for submission prescribed in the "Instructions to Bidders" shall be considered late and shall be returned unopened.

Section 7.3 - Opening of the Envelope for Qualification of Bidder

At the date and time stipulated in the "Instructions to Bidders", the PBAC shall open the envelope and ascertain whether the same is complete in terms of the information required under Section 5.4. Such information shall be recorded at the time, including the names and addresses of required witnesses. All bidders or their representatives present at the opening of the first envelopes shall sign a register of the opening of the qualification envelope.

Section 7.4 - Evaluation of Qualification Requirements

The qualification documents will first be evaluated prior to the opening of the technical proposal. The Agency/LGU shall inform bidders whether they are qualified or disqualified, and for the latter, the reasons for disqualification, within fifteen (15) calendar days. Only qualified bidders shall be allowed to participate in the bid evaluation. Disqualified bidders shall be informed of the grounds of disqualification and their technical and financial proposals returned unopened.

Section 7.5 - Rejection of Bids

Incomplete information on any of the envelopes and/or non-compliance with the bid security requirements prescribed in Section 7.1 (b) shall be grounds for automatic rejection of bids.

Section 7.6 - Opening of the Envelope for the Technical Proposal

At the date and time of bid opening, as stipulated in the "Instructions to Bidders", the PBAC shall open only the technical proposal and ascertain whether the same is complete in terms of the data/information required under Section 7.1 (b) above and whether the same is accompanied by the required bid security in the prescribed form, amount and period of validity. Such information shall be recorded at the time, including the names and addresses of required witnesses. All bidders or their representatives present at the opening of the first envelopes shall sign a register of the bid opening.

Section 7.7 - Opening of the Envelope for the Financial Proposal

Only those bidders whose technical proposal passed the evaluation criteria as prescribed under Section 8.1 hereof shall have their financial proposal opened for further evaluation. Those who failed the evaluation of the technical proposal shall not be considered further, and the PBAC shall return their financial proposals unopened together with the reasons for their disqualification from the bidding.

Once the bidders who have qualified for the evaluation of the financial proposal have been determined, the PBAC shall notify said bidders of the date, time and place of the opening of the envelopes for the financial proposal. The opening thereof shall follow the same procedures prescribed for the opening of the previous envelopes.

Section 7.8 - Withdrawal and/or Modification of Bids

Withdrawal and/or modification of bids may be allowed upon written notice by the bidder concerned to the Agency/LGU prior to the time and date set for the opening of bids (opening of first envelopes) as specified in the "Instructions to Bidders". No bids shall be modified or withdrawn after the time prescribed to open bids. Bid modifications received after said period shall be considered late and will be returned unopened. Withdrawal of bids after the bid opening date shall cause the forfeiture of the bidder's bid security.

RULE 8 - EVALUATION OF BIDS

Section 8.1 - The First Envelope Evaluation

The evaluation of bids shall be undertaken in two (2) stages, in accordance with the procedures described below.

The first envelope evaluation shall involve the assessment of the technical, operational, environmental, and financing viability of the proposal as contained in the bidders' first envelopes vis-à-vis the prescribed requirements and criteria/minimum standards and basic parameters prescribed in the bidding documents. Only those bids that have been determined to have positively passed the first stage of evaluation shall be qualified and considered for the second stage of evaluation.

The Agency/LGU concerned shall evaluate the technical proposals of the bidder in accordance with the following criteria:

a. Technical soundness (preliminary engineering design) - The basic engineering design of the project should conform to the minimum design and performance standards and specifications set by the Agency/LGU concerned as prescribed in the bidding documents. The engineering surveys, plans and estimates should be undertaken within +/- 20% of the final quantities. The Construction methods and schedules should also be presented and shown to be feasible or "doable".

b. Operational feasibility - The proposed organization, methods, and procedures for operating and maintaining the completed facility must be well defined, should conform to the prescribed performance standards, and should be shown to be workable. Where feasible, it should provide for the transfer of technology used in every phase of the project.

c. Environmental Standards - The proposed design and the technology of the project to be used must be in accordance with the environmental standards set forth by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), as indicated in the bid documents. Any adverse effects on the environment as a consequence of the project as proposed by the prospective Project Proponent must be properly identified, including the corresponding corrective/mitigating measures to be adopted.

d. Project Financing - The proposed financing plan should positively show that the same could adequately meet the Construction cost as well as the operating and maintenance costs requirements of the project. The Agency/LGU concerned shall assess the financing proposals of the bidders if the same matches and adequately meets the cost requirements of the project under bidding.

e. Enhancements - Other terms which the prospective Project Proponent may offer to the Government to make the proposals more attractive, such as, but not limited to provisions allowing the Government to share in revenues and less government guarantees or reduction in the level of Government Undertakings or support.

The PBAC of the Agency/LGU concerned shall complete the evaluation of the technical proposal within thirty (30) calendar days from the date the bids are opened.

Section 8.2 - The Second Envelope Evaluation

The second envelope evaluation shall involve the assessment and comparison of the financial proposals of the bidders, based on the parameters stated in Section 4.7 (h). The second stage evaluation shall be completed by the PBAC of the concerned Agency/LGU within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date the first stage evaluation shall have been completed.

In the case of BT and BLT schemes, a Filipino Project Proponent who submits an equally advantageous bid with exactly the same price and technical specifications as that of a foreign Project Proponent shall be given preference.

Section 8.3 - Right to Reject All Bids

The Agency/LGU concerned reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defects therein and accept the offer it deems most advantageous to the Government.

RULE 9 - NEGOTIATED CONTRACT

Section 9.1 - Direct Negotiation

Direct negotiation shall be resorted to when there is only one complying bidder left as defined hereunder:

a. If, after advertisement, only one prospective Project Proponent applies for pre-qualification and it meets the pre-qualification requirements, after which, it is required to submit a bid/proposal which is subsequently found by the Agency/LGU to be complying;

b. If, after advertisement, more than one prospective Project Proponent applied for pre-qualification but only one meets the pre-qualification requirements, after which it submits a bid proposal that is found by the Agency/LGU to be complying;

c. If, after pre-qualification of more than one prospective Project Proponent, only one submits a bid which is found by the Agency/LGU to be complying;

d. If, after pre-qualification, more than one prospective Project Proponent submit bids but only one is found by the Agency/LGU to be complying:

In such events, however, any disqualified bidder may appeal the disqualification of the concerned Agency/LGU to the Head of Agency, in case of national projects, or to the Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative, in case of local projects, within fifteen (15) working days from receipt of the notice of disqualification. The Head of Agency or the Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative shall act on the appeal within forty-five (45) working days from receipt thereof. The decision of the Head of Agency or the Head of the DILG unit concerned or his authorized representative shall be final and immediately executory.

Section 9.2 - Unsolicited Proposals

Unsolicited Proposals may be accepted by an Agency/LGU on a negotiated basis, subject to the conditions provided under Rule 10.

Section 9.3 - Conditions for Negotiated Projects

In addition to the above requisites for negotiated projects, the Approving Body must prescribe the Reasonable Rate of Return prior to the negotiation in the case of solicited proposals as referred to under Section 9.1 of these Revised IRR. The scope of negotiation, in the case of solicited proposals referred to under Section 9.1 of these Revised IRR, shall be limited to the financial proposal of the proponent and compliance with the approved Reasonable Rate of Return

Section 9.4 - Financial and Technical Evaluation of Negotiated Contracts

In so far as applicable, the same rules provided for the evaluation of the technical and financial aspects of bid proposals shall be applied in the evaluation of Negotiated Contracts authorized in the Act and these Revised IRR.

RULE 10 - UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS

Section 10.1 - Requisites for Unsolicited Proposals

Any Agency/LGU may accept Unsolicited Proposals on a negotiated basis provided that all the following conditions are met:

a. the project involves a new concept or technology and/or is not part of the List of Priority Projects:

b. no Direct Government Guarantee, subsidy or equity is required; and

c. the Agency/LGU concerned has invited by publication, for three (3) consecutive weeks, in a newspaper of general circulation, comparative or competitive proposals and no other proposal is received for a period of sixty (60) working days.

If no comparative or competitive proposal or no complying bid is received by the Agency/LGU, the original proponent shall immediately be awarded the contract. In the event that a comparative proponent submits a price proposal better than that submitted by the original proponent, the latter shall have the right to match such price proposal within thirty (30) working days from receipt of a notification from the Agency/LGU of the result of the comparative or competitive bid. Should the original proponent fail to match the price proposal of the comparative proponent within the specified period, the contract shall be awarded to the comparative proponent. On the other hand, if the original proponent matches the price proposal of the comparative proponent within the specified period, the project shall immediately be awarded to the original proponent.

Section 10.2 - New Technology

The Project Proponent proposing a project involving a new concept or technology shall incorporate in its proposal information regarding said new concept or technology which it should have directly, or through any of its key members, successfully implemented at a scale similar to the proposed project. The information disclosed must be in sufficient detail so as to allow the Agency/LGU to properly evaluate the new concept or technology. Additionally, the new technology must possess at least one of the following attributes:

a. A recognized process, design, methodology or engineering concept which has demonstrated its ability to significantly reduce implementation of Construction costs, accelerate project execution, improve safety, enhance project performance, extend economic life, reduce costs of facility maintenance and operations, or reduce negative environmental impact or social/economic disturbances or disruptions either during the project implementation/Construction phase or the operation phase;

b. A process for which the Project Proponent or any member of the proponent joint venture/consortium possesses exclusive rights, either world-wide or regionally; or

c. A design, methodology or engineering concept for which the proponent or a member of the proponent consortium or association possesses intellectual property rights.

Section 10.3 - Projects Ineligible for Unsolicited Proposals

Projects included in the "List of Priority Projects", as defined under Section 2.3, shall not be eligible to be accepted as Unsolicited Proposals, unless involving a new concept or technology. In addition, any component of an approved solicited project shall not be eligible for any Unsolicited Proposal.

Section 10.4 - Investment Incentives and Government Undertakings for Unsolicited Proposals

As a general rule, the Government may grant Investment Incentives and Government Undertakings to Unsolicited Proposals as enumerated under Rule 13, except for Direct Government Guarantees, direct government subsidy or government equity.

The sale, lease, or grant of usufruct, with consideration of government assets, including among others, right-of-way, to Project Proponents shall not be considered as direct subsidy or equity.

Section 10.5 - Submission of a Complete Proposal

For a proposal to be considered by the Agency/LGU, the proponent has to submit a complete proposal, which shall include a feasibility study, company profile, and the draft contract adverted to in Section 4.4 above The Agency/LGU shall acknowledge receipt of the proposal and advise the proponent whether the proposal is complete or incomplete within seven (7) calendar days from submission thereof. If incomplete, it shall indicate what information is lacking or necessary.

Section 10.6 - Treatment of More than one Proposal for the Same or Similar Project

In the case where the Agency/LGU receives more than one Unsolicited Proposal involving the same or similar project, the Agency/LGU may reject all such proposals and instead, bid out the project as a solicited proposal. Otherwise, the Agency/LGU shall evaluate the proposals using a first in time approach. Under this approach, the first complete proposal is evaluated and decided upon. The second complete proposal will only be entertained if the first one is rejected. Otherwise, the second proposal will be considered only if there is a failure in the negotiation of the first proposal or during the "invitation for comparative proposals" as defined under Section 10.11.

Section 10.7 - Evaluation of Unsolicited Proposals

The Agency/LGU is tasked with the initial evaluation of the proposal. The Agency/LGU shall: 1) appraise the merits of the project; 2) qualify the proponent based on the provisions of Rule 5 hereof; 3) assess the appropriateness of the contractual arrangement and reasonableness of the risk allocation; and 4) inform the Approving Body of its receipt of an Unsolicited Proposal. The Agency/LGU is given thirty (30) calendar days to evaluate the proposal from the date of submission of the complete proposal. Within this thirty (30)-day period, the Agency/LGU, shall advise the proponent in writing whether it accepts or rejects the proposal. Acceptance means commitment of the Agency/LGU to pursue the project and recognition of the proponent as "original proponent" subject to Section 10.8. At this point, the Agency/LGU will no longer entertain other similar proposals unless the parties are unable to agree during the period for negotiations specified in Section 10.8 below, or the original proponent is unable to comply with the parameters set by the Approving Body, or until the solicitation of comparative proposals has been completed. The Agency/LGU shall inform the Approving Body of its decision to accept or to reject the Unsolicited Proposal. In case of acceptance, the Agency/LGU shall submit to the Approving Body all pertinent documentation.

Section 10.8 - Negotiation With the Original Proponent

The Agency/LGU shall indicate in its letter of acceptance, as referred to under Section 10.7, the confirmation of the proponent as the "original proponent" and the mechanics of the negotiation including the commencement date and the authorized representative(s) of the Agency/LGU. Negotiations shall focus on the project scope, implementation arrangements, and the terms and conditions of the draft contract for the Unsolicited Proposal, among others. The Agency/LGU shall secure confirmation of the indicative Reasonable Rate of Return from the Approving Body prior to negotiation. The Agency/LGU may request the Approving Body for technical assistance during negotiations. The Agency/LGU and the original proponent shall conclude negotiations within a period of ninety (90) calendar days from receipt by the proponent of written notice from the Agency/LGU to commence negotiation. The Agency/LGU and the original proponent shall negotiate in good faith and endeavor to complete the negotiation within the ninety (90)-day period; provided, that should there be irreconcilable differences during the negotiation period, the Agency/LGU shall have the option to reject the proposal by advising the original proponent in writing stating the grounds for rejection and thereafter may accept a new Unsolicited Proposal, or bid out the project as a solicited proposal, or undertake the project on its own. The Agency/LGU shall, at the end of the ninety (90)-day negotiation period, submit a report to the Approving Body of the result of its negotiation with the original proponent.

Section 10.9 - Approval of Unsolicited Projects/Contracts by the Approving Body

The Head of Agency/LGU shall secure approval of the unsolicited project and draft contract from the Approving Body after negotiation with the original proponent. An Unsolicited Proposal shall be submitted to the Approving Body only upon official endorsement by the Head of the concerned Agency/LGU stating that the project meets the requisites for accepting Unsolicited Proposals as specified in Section 10.1 (a) and (b) above.

The Agency/LGU shall also submit to the Approving Body its evaluation/appraisal of the merits of the project as justification for accepting the project including providing the same of the acceptance letter to the original proponent as part of the documentation for the project.

Failure of the Approving Body to act on the project and contract within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of the endorsement by the Agency/LGU shall be deemed an approval thereof. The Agency/LGU may proceed with the solicitation of comparative proposals.

The approval by the Approving Body of the unsolicited project and contract under this section shall be valid only for a period of eighteen (18) months from the issuance of the approval unless the invitation for comparative proposals has been issued; provided, that the Approving Body shall issue a written notice of approval or disapproval upon the written request for extension by the Agency/LGU, which must be filed within eighteen (18) months from the issuance of such approval.

The original proponent shall, within forty-five (45) calendar days from receipt of Notice of Approval from the Approving Body, notify the Agency/LGU in writing of its acceptance of all the terms and conditions of the approval of the Approving Body. Failure by the original proponent to submit such acceptance in writing shall be deemed a rejection by the Agency/LGU of the Unsolicited Proposal. The Agency/LGU shall thereafter notify the original proponent of said rejection.

The "original proponent" status shall expire at the end of the validity period of the approval by the Approving Body of the unsolicited project and contract.

Section 10.10 - Tender Documents

The qualification and tender documents shall be prepared along the lines specified under Rules 4 and 5 hereof. The contract as approved by the Approving Body which shall be part of the tender documents will be considered final and non-negotiable by the comparative proponents. Proprietary information shall, however, be respected, protected and treated with utmost confidentiality. As such, it shall not form part of the bidding/tender and related documents.

Section 10.11 - Invitation for Comparative Proposals

The Agency/LGU PBAC shall publish the invitation for comparative proposals after receipt of the notification from the Original Proponent that the latter accepts all the terms and conditions indicated in the Notice of Approval, in accordance with Section 10.9. The invitation for comparative or competitive proposals should be published at least once every week for three (3) consecutive weeks in at least one (1) newspaper of general circulation. Said invitation should also be posted continuously in the website of the Agency/LGU concerned, if available, during the period stated above. For projects costing at least US$ 10 million, the invitation may also be published at least once (1) in at least one (1) international publication. It shall indicate the time, which should not be earlier than the last date of publication, and place where tender/bidding documents could be obtained. It shall likewise explicitly specify a time of sixty (60) working days reckoned from the date of issuance of the tender/bidding documents upon which proposals shall be received. Beyond said deadline, no proposals shall be accepted. A pre-bid conference shall be conducted ten (10) working days after the issuance of the tender/bidding documents.

Section 10.12 - Posting of Bid Bond by Original Proponent

The original proponent shall be required at the date of the first day of the publication of the "Invitation for comparative proposals" to submit a bid bond equal to the amount and in the form required of the comparative proponents.

Section 10.13 - Qualification of Comparative Proponents

The evaluation criteria used for qualifying the original proponent should be the same criteria used in the "Term of Reference" for the comparative proponents.

Section 10.14 - Submission of Proposal

The bidders are required to submit the proposal in three envelopes at the time and place specified in the Tender Documents. The first envelope shall contain the qualification documents, the second envelope the technical proposal as required under Section 7.1 (b), and the third envelope the financial proposal as required under Section 7.1 (c).

Section 10.15 - Evaluation of Comparative Proposals

Proposals shall be evaluated in three stages: Stage 1, qualification documents; Stage 2, the technical proposal, and Stage 3, the financial proposal. Only those bids which pass the first stage will be considered for the second stage and similarly, only those which pass the second stage will be considered for the third stage evaluation. The Agency/LGU will return to the disqualified bidders the remaining envelopes unopened, together with a letter explaining why they were disqualified. The criteria for evaluation will follow Rule 5 for the qualification of bidders and Rule 8 for the technical and financial proposals. The time frames under Rules 5 and 8 shall likewise be followed.

Section 10.16 - Disclosure of the Price Proposal

The decision to disclose the price or financial proposal of the original proponent in the Tender Documents shall be mutually agreed upon between the Agency/LGU and the original proponent. If the original proponent's price proposal was not disclosed in the Tender Documents, it should be revealed upon the opening of the financial proposals of the comparative proponents

Section 10.17 - Failure of a Winning Comparative Proponent to Enter into Contract

In the event of refusal, inability or failure of the winning comparative proponent to enter into contract with the Agency/LGU within the specified time in the Tender Documents, its bid security shall be forfeited in favor of the Agency/LGU. In such an event, the Agency/LGU concerned shall consider for award the bidder with the next-ranked complying comparative bid which is better than the offer of the original proponent. The original proponent shall again be given the right to match the comparative proponent's bid. If no other comparative bid is determined to be better than the offer of the original proponent, the project shall immediately be awarded to the original proponent

RULE 11 - AWARD AND SIGNING OF CONTRACT

Section 11.1 - Recommendation to Award

Within seven (7) calendar days from the date the financial evaluation shall have been completed, the Agency/LGU PBAC will submit to the Head of Agency/LGU a recommendation of award. The PBAC will prepare and submit a detailed evaluation/assessment report on its decision regarding the evaluation of the bids and explain in clear terms the basis of its recommendations.

Section 11.2 - Decision to Award

Within seven (7) calendar days from the submission by PBAC of the recommendation to award, the Head of Agency/LGU shall decide on the award. The approval shall be manifested by signing and issuing the "Notice of Award" to the winning Project Proponent within seven (7) calendar days from approval thereof.

All unsuccessful bidders shall be informed in writing of the decision of the Agency/LGU to award the project to the winning Project Proponent. Such decision shall be made available to the public when requested.

Section 11.3 - Notice of Award

The "Notice of Award", which is issued by the Head of Agency/LGU, shall indicate, among others, that the winning Project Proponent must submit within thirty (30) calendar days from official receipt of the "Notice of Award" the following:

a. prescribed performance security;

b. proof of commitment of the required equity contribution, as specified by the Agency/LGU:

i. In the case where the Project Proponent is a corporation - e.g., treasurer's affidavit attesting to actual paid-up capital, subscription agreement(s) between a shareholder(s) of the Project Proponent and the Project Proponent itself covering said equity contribution, or shareholders

...continued on page B11

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Temasek buys into StanChart

SINGAPORE—SINGAPORE'S TEMASEK Holdings purchased a minority stake worth $4 billion in Standard Chartered—probably paying top dollar for the most expensive bank listed on the London stock exchange—as the state investor increased its bet on Asia's strong economic growth.

The secretive investment firm, which is headed by Ho Ching, the wife of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, has bought stakes in several Asian banks, committing some $4.5 billion to buy shares in state-owned Bank of China and Construction Bank of China in the second half of 2005.

The deal for Asia-focused StanChart brings Temasek's total investments in the banking sector to around $22 billion. Temasek's total portfolio was valued at $64 billion at the end of its last financial year in March 2005.

StanChart's shares in Hong Kong fell nearly 3 percent to HK$203 by midafternoon on Tuesday, and tumbled more than 2 percent in early trade in London.

Temasek announced late on Monday that it had agreed to buy an 11.55 percent stake in StanChart from the estate of late banking tycoon Khoo Teck Puat at an undisclosed price.

Simon Israel, an executive director at Temasek, told the daily Business Times that the deal, which is subject to regulatory approvals, was a private transaction and neither party was under any obligation to disclose the price.

Temasek's stake in StanChart was worth 2.3 billion pounds ($4 billion), based on Monday's closing share price of 15.24 pounds.

Analysts said they expect Temasek to continue targeting the financial sector, a good proxy for booming economies, and added it could be interested in LG Card, South Korea's number two credit card issuer, which is up for sale.

StanChart shares have soared 62 percent in the last 12 months, benefiting from its exposure to high-growth economies and takeover speculation, and trade at 3.69 times their historical book value, according to Reuters data, making it the most expensive London-listed bank. *Reuters*

ADB urges emerging Asia to prepare for dollar fall

TOKYO—ASIAN COUNTRIES NEED to prepare for a possible sharp fall in the dollar and should allow their currencies to appreciate collectively in the event of such a decline, a senior official of the Asian Development Bank said on Tuesday.

Masahiro Kawai, head of the ADB's office of regional economic integration, said the chances of a rapid fall in the dollar were still small, but it could cause a significant turmoil in Asia if it takes place.

"If the US dollar goes down in the future, it would be best for East Asian countries to allow appreciation collectively," Kawai told a group of journalists in Tokyo. That way, the cost of letting their currencies appreciate could be divided among them, he said.

Kawai later said that by East Asia, he meant emerging East Asian countries, excluding Japan. He did not name specific countries.

Asked about the level of the ADB's concerns about a sharp fall in the dollar, Kawai said: "I don't think the possibility is high.

"But it is like avian flu. The possibility of avian flu spreading all over Asia or the world is limited, but once it spreads, it would have tremendous impact."

Kawai said the ADB's planned establishment of a theoretical Asian currency unit (Acu), comprising a basket of Asian currencies, will help monitor collective movements of regional currencies against the dollar.

He added that a sharp decline in the dollar, which could result from any shock to the US economy and disorderly adjustments of global imbalances, would harm trade in Asia and reduce the value of dollar-denominated assets in the foreign reserves of Asian countries. Kawai called for more flexibility in the currencies of Asian economies, though he did not point to any particular country.

"One issue is whether continuing to accumulate foreign reserves would be a good strategy or not... If a particular country tries to avoid appreciation (of its currency), it would be better for the country to let the currency be more flexible from now, rather than accumulating foreign reserves." The ADB has said allowing greater exchange flexibility in emerging East Asia would lesson the need for foreign exchange reserve accumulation by central banks and thus help contribute to an orderly resolution of global balance of payments imbalance. *Reuters*

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Flight and airport operations began recently at Singapore's new airport terminal designed to serve no-frills airlines, just three days after neighboring Malaysia unveiled Asia's first budget terminal, home to Asia's largest no-frills carrier, AirAsia. AP

Asia stocks up; US dollar steadies

SINGAPORE—ASIAN STOCK MARKETS made modest gains on Tuesday as investors waited for the first policy decision of the Federal Reserve under chairman Ben Bernanke and, more importantly, clues on the outlook for US interest rates.

Gold held above $566 an ounce, even as the dollar recouped some early losses, while oil stayed just above $64 a barrel as threats of attacks on oil facilities in Nigeria put a floor under prices.

The Fed is expected to lift US interest rates to 4.75 percent from 4.5 percent later on Tuesday, in what would be the 15th increase in as many meetings dating back to June 2004.

More important for markets are what signals the central bank might send on future rate moves, amid speculation that US interest rates may be nearing a peak.

"The market could react if the statement indicates in any way that the tightening cycle is winding down," said Shigeru Komatsu, forex dealer at Sumitomo Trust and Banking. "But the possibility that the Fed will say anything that will shake up the market is very low." Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei average ended up 0.24 percent at 16,690.24, its highest close since Feb. 7, and MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian shares was up 0.4 percent yesterday afternoon.

Traders buying most Nikkei component stocks on Tuesday can not claim dividend rights for this fiscal year, which ends on Friday. Without that incentive, some traders moved to lock in profits.

South Korean shares reversed morning falls to end 0.1 percent stronger, while Taiwan shares ended up 0.5 percent, with technology shares in both markets among the gainers.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index gained 0.4 percent in its morning session.

Australian shares hit a new intraday peak before ending down 0.05 percent—snapping a run that had seen them set record closing highs in each of the previfour session.

The index has risen 6.8 percent this year, with a third of that increase coming in the six trading days to Monday's close. *Reuters*

VSO

Title : VSO Country Director Philippines
Closing date: 17 April 2006
Interviews : 4 May 2006

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

TWO (2) YEAR RENTAL OF 3 UNITS PASSENGER VAN FOR BACMAN GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD (BGPF)
EDC 06-011

The Approved Budget is **PhP 5,940,000.00** to be charged against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is Two (2) years.

Application forms for eligibility and the bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, Fort Bonifacio (c/o N. P. Calling) and PNOC-EDC/BGPF, Bonga Sorsogon (c/o M. G. R. Yrureta) starting **March 22, 2006** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: Five Hundred (PhP 500.00).**

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 6, 2006, 2:30 p.m.** at PNOC-EDC BGPF, Bonga, Sorsogon. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila, not later than **2:00 p.m. on April 19, 2006 (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time)** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) FRANCIS M. DOLOR
BAC Chairman

(PDI - March 22 & 29, 2006)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES & EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
City of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Securities and Exchange Commission, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites qualified local bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the SECURITY SERVICES Contract for 2006 for the SEC Main Office, SEC Building, EDSA Greenhills, Mandaluyong City. The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for ten (10) guards per shift, in three (3) shifts, is FIVE MILLION NINE HUNDRED FOUR THOUSAND PESOS (5,904,000.00). The contract duration shall be for the period of one (1) year.

a. Corporation duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizen of the Philippines; or
b. Bidder should have a valid and current license issued by PNP; and
c. Must have at least ten (10) years continuous operation.

A complete set of bidding documents may be obtained by the eligible bidder starting **March 29 to April 10, 2006** at the General Services Division, 4th floor, SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon presentation of original PNP License to Operate and a payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00). For further details, please contact Asst. Director Romeo O. Dauag at Tel. No. 727-3320. Only those bidders who purchased the Bid Documents are allowed to attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Pre-Bid conference will be on **April 10, 2006, 10:00 A.M.** at the Hearing Room No. 2, Compliance and Enforcement Department (CED), 5th Floor SEC Building.

Deadline for submission of bids will be on **April 28, 2006, 2:00 P.M.** at the General Services Division, 4th floor, SEC Building and immediately thereafter, the opening of bids will be held at the Hearing Room No. 2, Compliance and Enforcement Department (CED), 5th Floor, SEC Building. Bids submitted after 2:00 P.M. will no longer be accepted.

Republic Act 9184, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) shall govern all particulars relative to Eligibility, Bid Bond, Pre-Bid Conference, Bid Evaluation, Post Qualification and Awards of Contracts.

The SEC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any required formalities therein and to award the contract to the bidder whose proposal as evaluated is most advantageous to the Commission.

SEC also assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that any award will be made.

(Sgd.) JOSE AQUINO
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI—March 29 & April 5, 2006)

...from page B9

agreement between and amongst 2 or more shareholders of the Project Proponent undertaking to contribute/subscribe the required equity contribution; or

ii. In the case of a joint venture/consortium - an undertaking of the members thereof to infuse the required equity contribution to the joint venture/consortium.

c. proof of firm commitments from reputable financial institution to provide sufficient credit lines to cover the total estimated cost of the project;

d. In the case of a joint venture/consortium, the agreement indicating that the members are jointly and severally liable for the obligations of the Project Proponent under the contract; or

e. In case an SPC is formed for purposes of undertaking the project, proof of registration in accordance with Philippine laws.

f. such other conditions imposed by the Agency/LGU.

Failure to submit the requirements within the prescribed thirty (30)-calendar day period will result in confiscation of the bid security. Within seven (7)-calendar days upon receipt of the foregoing requirements for award, the Head of Agency/LGU shall determine and notify the winning bidder of its compliance of all the conditions stated in the said notice.

SECTION 11.4 - FORMATION OF SPECIAL PURPOSE COMPANY

The winning Project Proponent may cause the incorporation of a special purpose company (SPC) that shall assume and accede to all the rights and obligations of the winning Project Proponent, Provided, that:

a. the SPC is registered in accordance with applicable Philippine corporate/commercial/investment laws;

b. the winning Project Proponent subscribes to and pays for a significant/principal shareholding or controlling interest in the SPC, subject to the nationality and ownership requirements under the Constitution and other applicable laws. The required level of share ownership may be indicated in the tender documents or determined as a condition prior to contract award;

c. In the case of a joint venture/consortium, all members thereof shall present proof of contractual or other legally binding ties to or relationships with the SPC for the development and implementation of the project in accordance with their submitted business plan, e.g., for facility owners/developers/equity investors - subscription to and payment for a significant number of shares in the SPC; for Contractors or operators - binding appointment and undertaking to be the Contractor/operator or duly signed engineering, procurement and Construction (EPC) contract/operation and maintenance agreement; for financial institutions - letter of firm commitment to raise or provide financing to the project;

d. an accession undertaking is executed by the SPC and the winning proponent in favor of the Agency/LGU making the SPC principally liable for the performance of the winning Project Proponent's obligations under the Notice of Award and/or the contract;

e. a written notice to form the SPC and the proposed accession are submitted to the Agency/LGU within five (5) calendar days from date of receipt of Notice of Award.

SECTION 11.5 - WITHDRAWAL/SUBSTITUTION OF A MEMBER

Subject to the approval of the Agency/LGU, any member of the joint venture or consortium, or a shareholder of the SPC created (who was a member of such joint venture or consortium), or its pre-qualified Contractors may withdraw as such prior to award of the project or any time during the contract term, provided that, the remaining members or shareholders with or without the substitute are still legally, technically, and financially capable of successfully carrying out the implementation/operation of the project or that a suitable and acceptable substitute with equal or better qualifications is replacing such withdrawing member or shareholder subject to the provision in Section 11.3 (d).

A withdrawal made in violation of this section shall be a ground for disqualification or cancellation of the contract, as the case may be, and forfeiture of the proponent's bid or performance security.

SECTION 11.6 - VALIDITY OF BIDS/RETURN OF BID SECURITY

The execution of the contract shall be made within the period of the validity of the bid security. The required bid security shall be valid for a reasonable period but in no case beyond one hundred eighty (180) calendar days following the opening of the bids. Bid securities shall be returned to the unsuccessful bidders as soon as the contract is signed by the winning bidder.

SECTION 11.7 - EXTENSION OF VALIDITY OF BIDS

When an extension of validity of bids is considered necessary, those who submitted bids shall be requested in writing to extend the validity of their bids before the expiration date. However, bidders shall not be allowed to modify or revise the price or other substance of their bids.

Bidders shall have the right to refuse to grant such an extension without forfeiting their bid security, but those who are willing to extend the validity of their bids should be required to provide a suitable extension of bid security.

SECTION 11.8 - FAILURE OF BIDDING

In the case of solicited bids, when no complying bids are received or in case of failure to execute the contract with a qualified and contracting bidder due to the refusal of the latter, the bidding shall be declared a failure. In such cases, the project shall be subjected to a re-bidding.

RULE 12 - CONTRACT APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 12.1 - EXECUTION/APPROVAL OF THE CONTRACT

The Agency/LGU and Project Proponent shall execute the draft contract as approved by the Approving Body. The authorized signatory(ies) of the winning bidder and the Agency/LGU shall execute and sign the contract for the project, within seven (7) calendar days from receipt by the winning bidder of the notice from the Agency/LGU that all conditions stated in the Notice of Award have been complied with. Consistent with Article 1159 of the New Civil Code, the contract is the law between the parties and the parties shall perform their respective prestations, obligations, and undertakings thereunder with utmost good faith with the end in view of attaining the objective hereof. An original signed copy of the contract shall be submitted to the Approving Body within seven (7) calendar days after signing thereof.

In the event of refusal, inability or failure of the winning bidder to enter into contract with the Government within the time provided therefor, the Agency/LGU concerned shall forfeit its bid security. In such an event, the Agency/LGU concerned shall consider the bidder with the next ranked complying bid. If the same shall likewise refuse or fail to enter into contract with the Government, its bid security shall likewise be forfeited and the Agency/LGU concerned shall consider the next ranked complying bid, and so on until a contract shall have been entered into. In the event that the concerned Agency/LGU is unable to execute the contract with any of the complying bidders, a failure of bidding will be declared and the project may be subjected to a re-bidding.

SECTION 12.2 - OTHER APPROVALS FOR CONTRACT

The Project Proponent shall, as may be required under the existing laws, rules and regulations secure any and all other approvals for the contract or the implementation thereof from government agencies or bodies including the Regulator in the case of Public Utility Projects. This includes securing the necessary and appropriate environmental clearances from the DENR prior to actual project Construction. The DENR shall act on the environmental clearance of the project within the time frame prescribed and following the guidelines of DENR Administrative Order No. 96-37 and subsequent guidelines as may be issued from time to time. The Agency/LGU may provide the necessary assistance to the Project Proponent in securing all the required clearances. The contract shall provide milestones in securing such other approvals required for the implementation of the contract.

SECTION 12.3 - GRANT OF FRANCHISE

Subject to the provisions of the Constitution and other existing laws, once a contract involving Public Utility Projects is executed by the Project Proponent and the Agency/LGU, a presumption arises that the public interest will be served by the implementation of the project covered thereby, and immediately upon application by the Project Proponent, the Regulator shall grant in favor of the Project Proponent a Franchise on a provisional basis to operate the facility and collect the tolls, fees, rentals, and other charges stipulated under the contract, and after hearing and determination that all other requirements are complied with, make such Franchise permanent and for a fixed term.

SECTION 12.4 - CONTRACT EFFECTIVITY

The contract shall be effective upon signing thereof by the Head of Agency/LGU and unless another date is stipulated therein.

SECTION 12.5 - NOTICE TO COMMENCE

The concerned Agency/LGU shall issue the "Notice to Commence Implementation" of the project to the proponent not later than seven (7) calendar days from the date of the approval/signing of the contract by the Head of Agency/LGU.

SECTION 12.6 - PREPARATION AND APPROVAL OF DETAILED ENGINEERING DESIGN

The Project Proponent shall be responsible for the preparation of the detailed engineering designs and plans based on the prescribed minimum design and performance standards and specifications and shall submit the same to the Agency/LGU concerned.

The Agency/LGU concerned shall review the detailed engineering designs and plans prepared by the Project Proponent in terms of its compliance with the prescribed standards and specifications, and if found acceptable, shall approve the same for incorporation in the contract to be signed by the Project Proponent and the Agency/LGU. This approval by the Agency/LGU concerned notwithstanding, the Project Proponent shall be solely responsible for the integrity of its detailed engineering designs and plans. The approval thereof by the Agency/LGU concerned does not diminish this responsibility, nor does it transfer any part of such responsibility to the Agency/LGU concerned.

In the case of local projects, the LGU concerned shall ensure that the technical designs, plans, specifications, and related aspects necessary for the project's Construction, operation and maintenance shall be based on relevant local and national policies, standards and guidelines. Moreover, the LGU shall consult with appropriate national regulatory bodies regarding national policies, standards, and guidelines in granting the necessary Franchise.

SECTION 12.7 - PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The Project Proponent shall build the facility in accordance with the design and performance standards and specifications prescribed in the approved detailed engineering design. For this Construction stage, the Project Proponent may engage the services of foreign and/or Filipino Contractors that comply with the requirements as prescribed under Section 5.4 (a) and (b). In the case of foreign Contractors, Filipino labor shall be employed in the different phases of the Construction works where Filipino skills are available. Hiring of labor shall be subject to existing labor laws, rules and regulations.

SECTION 12.8 - PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKS

To guarantee the faithful performance by the Project Proponent of its obligations under the contract, including the prosecution of the Construction works related to the project, the Project Proponent shall post a performance guarantee in favor of the Agency/LGU concerned, within the period and in the form and amount stipulated in the Notice of Award. The performance security may be in the form of cash, bank draft or guarantee confirmed by a local bank (in the case of foreign bidders bonded by a foreign bank), letter of credit issued by a reputable bank, surety bond callable on demand issued by the GSIS or by surety or insurance companies duly accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, or a combination thereof, in accordance with the following schedules:

a. Cash, irrevocable letter of credit, bank draft - a minimum of two percent (2%) of the total Project Cost.

b. Bank Guarantee - a minimum of five percent (5%) of the total Project Cost.

c. Surety Bond - a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the total Project Cost.

The performance guarantee shall be valid up to acceptance by the Agency/LGU of the facility.

SECTION 12.9 - PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE FOR OPERATION

For projects where the proponent or other third parties shall operate the project, the Agency/LGU shall determine whether the Project Proponent will post an operating security, simultaneously with the acceptance of the facility and the release of the performance security. The operating security will be issued to guarantee the proper operation of the project in accordance with the operating parameters and specifications under the contract. The Agency/LGU shall determine the amount but the form shall be in accordance with the preceding section. This operating security shall be valid ninety (90) calendar days after the turn-over of the facility, as contemplated in Section 12.22, or as may be provided in the contract whichever is longer.

SECTION 12.10 - REVIEW OF PROJECT CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The Agency/LGU may inspect and check, from time to time, the project to determine whether the project is constructed, operated and maintained in accordance with the approved plans, specifications, standards and costs under the contract.

In the event that the Agency/LGU concerned shall find any deviation from or non-compliance with the approved plans, specifications and standards, it shall bring the same to the attention of the Project Proponent for the necessary corrective actions. Failure of the Project Proponent to correct the deviation within the time prescribed by the Agency/LGU may be a ground for the rescission/ termination of the contract, in accordance with Section 12.20 (b) of these Revised IRR. Such technical supervision by the Agency/LGU concerned shall not diminish the singular responsibility of the Project Proponent for the proper Construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility, nor does it transfer any part of that responsibility to the Agency/LGU.

SECTION 12.11 - CONTRACT VARIATION

Subject to the prior approval by the Approving Body, upon recommendation by the Agency/LGU, a contract variation may be allowed by the Agency/LGU, Provided, that:

a. Except as may be allowed under a parametric formula in the contract itself, there is no increase in the agreed fees, tolls and charges or a decrease in the Agency/LGU's revenue or profit share derived from the project; or

b. There is no reduction in the scope of works or performance standards, or fundamental change in the contractual arrangement nor extension in the contract term, except in cases of breach on the part of the Agency/LGU of its obligations under the contract; or

c. No additional Government Undertaking, or increase in the financial exposure of the Government under the project; or.

d. Such is necessary due to an unforeseeable event beyond the control of the parties.

Under no circumstances shall a Project Proponent proceed to commence a proposed contract variation unless approved by the Approving Body. Failure to secure approval of the Approving Body shall render the contract variation void.

SECTION 12.12 - MILESTONES

The Project Proponent shall execute the project in accordance with pre-determined milestones. Failure by the Project Proponent to comply with these milestones may result to contract rescission and forfeiture of the performance security of the proponent, in accordance with Section 12.20 (b) hereof.

SECTION 12.13 - RELEASE OF PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE/OPERATING SECURITY

a. Performance Guarantee

The performance guarantee shall be released by the Agency/LGU concerned after the issuance of the "Certificate of Completion and Acceptance" of the Construction works, and the acceptance by the Agency/LGU of the project as completed in accordance with the agreed standards and specifications, provided that there are no claims filed against the Project Proponent or its Contractor

As may be agreed upon in the contract, a portion of the performance security shall be released upon compliance with corresponding milestones.

b. Operating Security

The operating security shall be released by the Agency/LGU concerned on the transfer date of the facility, provided that there are no claims filed against the Project Proponent and its Contractor.

SECTION 12.14 - LIQUIDATED DAMAGES

Where the Project Proponent fails to satisfactorily complete the work on or before completion date, including any extension or grace period duly granted, or meet the operating performance standard as prescribed in the contract, the Project Proponent shall pay the Agency/LGU concerned liquidated damages, as specified in the contract as an indemnity and not by way of penalty. The performance security or operating security, as the case may be, shall answer for any liquidated damages due to the Agency/LGU.

During the Construction period, the amount of liquidated damages due for every calendar day of delay beyond the completion date will be determined by the Agency/LGU. During the operation period, the amount of liquidated damages, which will be determined by the Agency/LGU, shall be based on the principle of fair compensation for damages which the Agency/LGU will sustain as a result of the Project Proponent's failure to meet its obligations.

The imposition and collection of liquidated damages shall be without prejudice to the right of the Agency/LGU concerned to rescind the contract and proceed with the procedures prescribed under Section 12.20 (b).

SECTION 12.15 - REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

The Project Proponent shall, within the contract term and the warranty period prescribed under Section 12.22, undertake the necessary and appropriate repair and maintenance of the project, in accordance with the design and performance standards prescribed in the approved contract, in order to ensure that the facility operates at the desired level of service. For this purpose, and where applicable, a portion of the project's revenues equivalent to the cost of the project's repair and maintenance, as indicated in the Project Proponent's bid proposal shall be set aside and reserved exclusively for repair and maintenance costs of the project. For facility, an escrow account may be established for the purpose.

SECTION 12.16 - REPAYMENT SCHEMES

12.16.1 General Classification

The repayment schemes for the projects shall depend on the contractual arrangement as follows or as may be approved by the Approving Body:

a. For projects undertaken through BOT, CAO, DOT, ROT, BOO and ROO arrangements, the Project Proponents may be repaid by authorizing it to collect reasonable tolls, fees, and charges for a fixed term. In the case of BOT, CAO, DOT, ROT arrangements, such term shall in no case exceed fifty (50) years. However, for BOO and ROO arrangements, the Project Proponent, upon renewal of its Franchise or contract with the Agency or LGU, may be allowed to continue collecting toll, fees, charges and rentals for the operation of the facility or the provision of the service.

b. For projects undertaken through BTO arrangement - the Project Proponent may be repaid by either of the following two options: First Option - the Agency/LGU provides Amortization as may be appropriate and reasonable. Tolls, fees, rentals and charges that the Project Proponent may collect while operating the facility on behalf of the Agency/LGU may be applied directly to the Amortization. Moreover, the Facility operator may be repaid by the Agency/LGU through a management fee as may be incorporated in the management contract entered between the Agency/LGU and the Project Proponent; Second Option - the Project Proponent may be allowed to directly collect tolls, fees, rentals and charges for a fixed term.

c. For projects undertaken through BT and BLT arrangements - the Project Proponent may be repaid by the Agency/LGU through Amortization as may be appropriate and reasonable.

d. Where applicable, the proponent may likewise be repaid in the form of a share in the revenue of the project or other non-monetary payments, such as, but not limited to the grant of commercial development rights or the grant of a portion or percentage of the reclaimed land, subject to constitutional requirements.

e. For projects undertaken through arrangements not enumerated under this Act but approved/ authorized by the NEDA Board, the Project Proponent may be repaid through any schemes as recommended by the ICC and approved/authorized by the NEDA Board.

12.16.2 Tolls, fees, rentals and charges

The proposed tolls, fees, and charges shall be considered by the Agency/LGU in the evaluation of the bid, taking into account the reasonableness thereof to the end-users of the facility. The tolls, fees, charges and rentals that a Project Proponent may charge for the use of the facility shall be those as approved by the Approving Body consistent with Section 1.3 (a.a), resulting from the bidding, and incorporated in the contract, which, shall be upheld/adopted/accorded utmost weight/recognized by the Regulator.

12.16.3 Remittance of Earnings or Other Amounts Due to a Foreign Project Proponent

The remittance of earnings and other amounts due to a foreign proponent under the contract shall be in accordance with pertinent laws, rules and regulations especially those issued by the BSP.

SECTION 12.17 - REVENUE SHARING

The Agency/LGU concerned may share in the revenue from the operation of the Project Proponent in the form of either a fixed fee or a certain percentage of the gross revenue or a combination of both, provided that the same is indicated in the bidding documents and included in the contract.

SECTION 12.18 - ADJUSTMENTS OF TOLLS/FEES/RENTALS/CHARGES

The tolls, fees, rentals and charges may be subject to adjustment during the life of the contract, based on the pre-determined formula and official price indices prescribed in the "Instructions to Bidders" and the approved contract. For this purpose, prior to bidding, the concerned Agency/LGU shall secure either the advice of the Regulator or the approval of the Approving body or both, as the case maybe, for such formula. The monitoring of the consistency of the proposed adjustments of tolls, fees, rentals and charges with the prescribed rate of return, if any, shall be undertaken by the appropriate regulatory body or Implementing Agency/LGU.

Price Indices shall be based on the official issuances by the National Statistics Office (NSO), BSP, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and other sources authorized by the Agency/LGU concerned prior to bidding.

SECTION 12.19 - AUDIT OF COLLECTIONS

All revenues, share and/or receipts pertaining to or accruing to the Agency/LGU derived from any project proposed under the Act and these Revised IRR, including expenditures or use of funds and property, owned or held in trust by, or pertaining to the Government, shall be subject to examination audit by the Commission on Audit (COA), including i) ensuring that such revenues, share and/or receipts are fully and properly accounted for and remitted to the Agency/LGU, and ii) determining if the mandated return on rate base is complied with, in the case of Public Utility Projects.

All revenues and receipts pertaining to or accruing to the Project Proponent shall be treated as private funds including interest or yield thereon, which may be remitted directly to the Project Proponent, as may be stipulated in the contract.

SECTION 12.20 - CONTRACT TERMINATION/RESCISSION

The contract may be terminated/rescinded in the following events:

a. If the Agency/LGU concerned fails to comply with any major obligation prescribed in the approved contract, and such failure is not remediable or if remediable shall remain unremedied for an unreasonable length of time, the Project Proponent may, with prior notice to the concerned Agency/LGU, specifying the turn-over date, terminate the contract. In such an event, the Project Proponent shall be reasonably compensated by the Government for equivalent or proportionate contract cost, as defined in the contract subject to (c) below.

b. If the Project Proponent refuses or fails to perform any of the provisions of the approved contract with such diligence as will ensure the project's completion, operation and maintenance in accordance with the prescribed technical and performance standards or otherwise fails to satisfy any of the contract provisions including compliance with the prescribed/agreed milestone activities, or commits any substantial breach of the approved contract, the Agency/LGU shall notify the Project Proponent in writing of the same and if not corrected within the time specified, the Agency/LGU concerned may rescind the contract. In such an event, the Agency/LGU concerned may either:

i. Take over the facility and assume all attendant liabilities thereof; or

ii. Allow the Project Proponent's lenders/creditors/banks to exercise their rights and interests under the loan and collateral documents with respect to the project.

In any case, the Agency/LGU concerned shall likewise forfeit the performance security of the defaulting Project Proponent.

c. In the event that the project/contract is: (a) revoked, cancelled, or terminated by (i) the Agency/LGU in accordance with the contract through no fault of the Project Proponent or (ii) by mutual agreement, or (b) revoked or canceled by a court by final judgment through no fault of the Project Proponent, the Agency/LGU shall compensate the said Project Proponent for its actual expenses incurred in the project plus a Reasonable Rate of Return thereon not exceeding that stated in the contract, as of the date of contract termination, provided that the interest of the Government in these instances shall be duly insured with the GSIS or any other insurance entity duly accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, provided further that the cost of the insurance coverage shall be included in the terms and conditions of the approved contract.

In the cases referred to in (a) and (c) above, an independent appraiser, mutually acceptable to the Agency/LGU and the Project Proponent, shall determine the amount to be paid to the Project Proponent, which determination shall be made within a period not more than one hundred eighty (180) calendar days from contract rescission or termination. The amount determined by the independent appraiser shall be binding to both the Project Proponent and the Agency/LGU.

In cases of emergency or when the public interest so requires, the Agency/LGU may immediately take-over the facility prior to the determination of said amount and payment thereof to the Project Proponent. Unless otherwise agreed upon by the Agency/LGU and the Project Proponent, the amount fixed by said independent appraiser shall be paid by the Agency/LGU not later than ninety (90) calendar days from said independent appraiser's advice of such determination, subject to the enactment of a law or ordinance, as the case may be, appropriating such amount, if required.

SECTION 12.21 - VENUE FOR LITIGATION

The venue for the resolution of disputes, arbitration or litigation shall be as mutually agreed upon by the parties to the contract. In default thereof, the venue shall be in the Philippines.

SECTION 12.22 - TRANSFER OF AND WARRANTY OVER THE FACILITY

Under Contractual Arrangements involving transfer of the facility to the Agency/LGU, the transfer or turnover will necessarily include the transfer of full legal ownership over the project in favor of the Agency/LGU, subject to any existing liens as may be agreed upon in the project agreement. The Project Proponent shall provide warranty that the facility meets the project technical specifications/agreed system features, performance standards and services in connection therewith for a period not less than one (1) year from the turnover of the facility. For this purpose, the Project Proponent shall put up a warranty security in the form of cash, letter of credit, or bank draft/guarantee issued by a reputable local/foreign bank, or a surety bond issued by the GSIS or an entity duly registered and recognized by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, callable on demand and acceptable to the Agency/LGU, or any combination thereof payable to the Agency/LGU concerned, the amount of which shall be determined by the Agency/LGU and shall be stipulated in the contract. The warranty security shall be made effective immediately upon transfer of full legal ownership over the project in favor of the Agency/LGU, as described above.

RULE 13 - INVESTMENT INCENTIVES AND GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKINGS

SECTION 13.1 - SOURCES OF FINANCING

In the Construction of projects authorized under the Act and these Revised IRR, the Project Proponent may obtain the required financing for the Construction of the project from foreign and/or domestic sources.

SECTION 13.2 - INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

The following investment incentives will be made available to Project Proponents:

a. Projects undertaken through Contractual Arrangements authorized under these Revised IRR costing more than PhP 1.0 billion shall, upon registration with the Board of Investments (BOI), be entitled to incentives as provided for under the Omnibus Investment Code.

b. Projects undertaken through Contractual Arrangements authorized under these Revised IRR costing PhP 1.0 billion or less may, upon registration with BOI, avail of incentives provided for under the Omnibus Investment Code subject to inclusion of the project activity or sector in the current Investment Priorities Plan (IPP) of BOI.

c. Projects undertaken through Contractual Arrangements authorized under these Revised IRR shall also be entitled to other incentives, as provided under existing laws, such as, but not limited to incentives under P.D. 535 (1974), otherwise known as the "Tourism Incentives Program of 1974," and R.A. 7156, otherwise known as the "Mini-Hydroelectric Power Incentives Act".

d. LGUs may provide additional tax incentives, exemptions, or reliefs, subject to the provisions of the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 and other pertinent laws.

SECTION 13.3 - GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKINGS

Subject to existing laws, policies, rules and regulations, the Government may provide any form of direct or indirect support or contribution, such as, but not limited, to the following, subject to the conditions for Unsolicited Proposals as specified under Section 10.1 hereof:

a. Cost Sharing - This shall refer to the Agency/LGU concerned bearing a portion of capital expenses associated with the establishment of an infrastructure development facility, such as, the provision of access infrastructure, right-of-way, transfer of ownership over, or usufruct, or possession of land, building or any other real or personal property for direct use in the project and/or any partial financing of the project, or components thereof, Provided, that such shall not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the Project Cost, and the balance to be provided by the Project Proponent. Such government share may be financed from direct government appropriations and/or from Official Development Assistance (ODA) of foreign government or institutions.

b. Credit Enhancements - This shall refer to direct and indirect support to a development facility by the Project Proponent and/or Agency/LGU concerned, the provision of which is contingent upon the occurrence of certain events and/or risks, as stipulated in the contract. Credit enhancements are allocated to the party that is best able to manage and assume the consequences of the risk involved. Credit enhancements may include, but are not limited to, government guarantees on the performance, or the obligation of the Agency/LGU under its contract with the Project Proponent, subject to existing laws on indirect guarantees. Indirect Guarantees shall refer to an agreement whereby the Government or any of its Agencies/LGUs assumes full or partial responsibility for or assists in maintaining the financial standing of the Project Proponent or project company in order that the Project Proponent/ company avoids defaulting on the Project Loans, subject to fulfillment of the Project Proponent/ company of its undertakings and obligations under the project agreement.

c. Direct Government Subsidy - This shall refer to an agreement whereby the Government, or any of its Agencies/LGUs will: (a) defray, pay for or shoulder a portion of the Project Cost or the expenses and costs in operating or maintaining the project; (b) condone or postpone any payments due from the Project Proponent; (c) contribute any property or assets to the project; (d) in the case of LGUs, waive or grant special rates on real property taxes on the project during the term of the contractual arrangement; and/or (e) waive charges or fees relative to business permits or licenses that are to be obtained for the Construction of the project, all without receiving payment or value from the Project Proponent and/or Facility operator for such payment, contribution or support.

d. Direct Government Equity - This shall refer to the subscription by the Government or any of its agencies or Local Government Units of shares of stock or other securities convertible to shares of stock of the project company, whether such subscription will be paid by the money or assets.

e. Performance Undertaking - This shall refer to an undertaking of a department, bureau, office, commission, authority, agency, GOCC, or LGU in assuming responsibility for the performance of the Agency's/LGU's obligations under the contractual arrangement including the payment of monetary obligations, in case of default. These undertakings may be subject to payment of risk premium to the Government or LGU, or any other authorized agency.

f. Legal Assistance - This shall refer to the extension of representation by government lawyers to a Project Proponent but only in cases, hearings, or inquiries where the Agency/LGU and Project Proponent are party-defendants/respondents therein including the adoption by such government lawyers of positions and strategies consistent with upholding the validity of the approved contractual arrangement.

g Security Assistance - This shall refer to the deployment of government security forces, either from the Philippine National Police (PNP) or the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the vicinity of the project site to provide security during the implementation of the project up to completion.

The Agency/LGU may offer any one or more Government Undertakings relative to a project, which shall be submitted to the Approving Body for the purposes of obtaining approval for the project and the contract; provided, that the grant of such Government Undertaking has been pre-cleared in principle, in writing, by the department, bureau, office, commission, authority, agency, GOCC, or LGU that will grant the same.

RULE 14 - COORDINATION AND MONITORING OF PROJECTS

SECTION 14.1 - THE BOT CENTER

The BOT Center shall be responsible for the coordination and monitoring of projects implemented under Contractual Arrangements or schemes authorized under these Revised IRR. Project monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that the project complies with these Revised IRR, including the proponent's required environmental clearances from the DENR. For this purpose, concerned Agencies/LGUs shall periodically submit to the BOT Center information on the status of projects implemented by them. In addition, all concerned Agencies/LGUs shall submit to the BOT Center a copy of all Unsolicited Proposals that they receive and all other related documents. The BOT Center is also hereby mandated to guide the Agency/LGU in the preparation and development of the project.

At the end of every calendar year, BOT Center shall report to the ICC, President, and the Congress on the progress of all projects implemented under these Revised IRR.

SECTION 14.2 - TIMELINES

All timelines shall be contained in a flow chart herein attached as Annex A. The BOT Center shall monitor the compliance of the Agencies/LGUs with the timelines prescribed in these Revised IRR.

SECTION 14.3 - BOT UNITS

Each concerned Agency/LGU may create a BOT Unit headed by a senior official of the Agency/LGU and shall designate a senior official as BOT Project Development Officer (PDO), who shall be responsible for planning, overseeing, and monitoring projects of Agencies/LGUs authorized under the Act and these Revised IRR. The PDO shall closely coordinate with BOT Center.

SECTION 14.4 - INFORMING CONGRESS

A report regarding the salient features or a copy of each contract, involving a project entered into under the provisions of these Revised IRR, shall be submitted to Congress for its information.

RULE 15 - FINAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 15.1 - IRR COMMITTEE

The Committee constituted pursuant to Section 11 of R.A. 6957, as amended by R.A. 7718, may be reconvened by its Chairman at his instance, or upon the recommendation of any members of the Committee, formulate and prescribe amendments to these Revised IRR, consistent with the letter and spirit of the Act. No amendments to these Revised IRR may be adopted and prescribed by the Committee without due public consultation/hearing and publication.

SECTION 15.2 - EFFECTIVITY OF THESE REVISED IRR OR AMENDMENTS THERETO

Amendments to these Revised IRR or amendments thereto shall become effective fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

SECTION 15.3 - TRANSITORY PROVISION

For projects endorsed by the Agency/LGU to the Approving Body before the effectivity of the amendments to these Revised IRR, the previous IRR shall govern.

SECTION 15.4 - SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

In the event any of the provisions of these Revised IRR is declared void or unenforceable by final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction, the other provisions unaffected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

PETER B. FAVILA
Secretary of Trade and Industry/BOT Center
Chairman, BOT IRR Committee

ROMULO L. NERI
Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning
Director General, National Economic and Development Authority
Member

CESAR V. PURISIMA
Secretary of Finance
Member

HERMOGENES E. EBDANE JR
Secretary of Public Works and Highways
Member

LEANDRO R. MENDOZA
Secretary of Transportation and Communication
Member

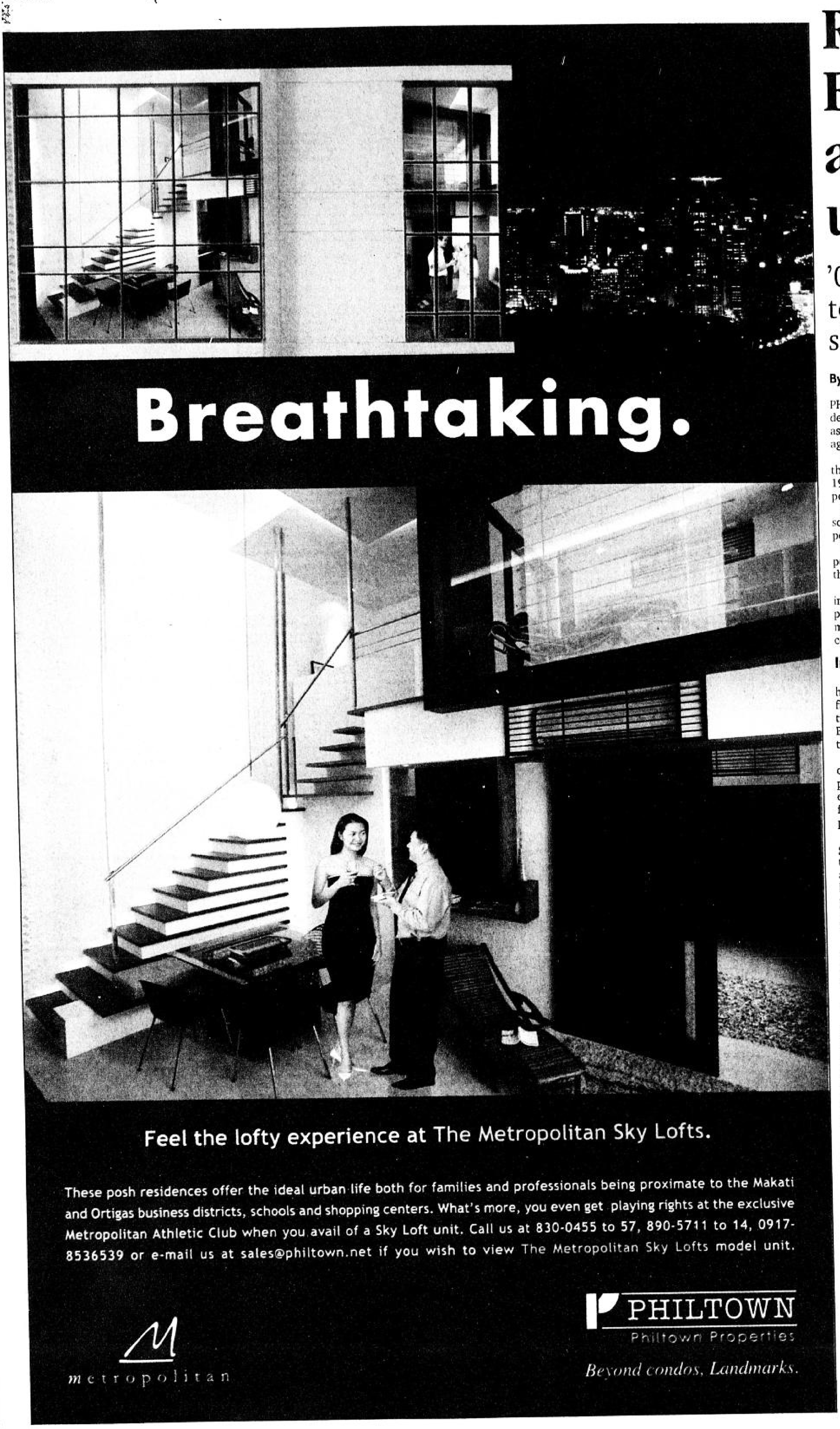
RAPHAEL P. M. LOTILLA
Secretary of Energy
Member

ARTHUR C. YAP
Secretary of Agriculture
Member

ARMANDO A. DE CASTRO
OIC, Environment and Natural Resources
Member

ANGELO T. REYES
Secretary of the Interior and Local Government
Member

(PDI–March 29, 2006)



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RP bank's FCDU assets up 9.4%

'05 growth seen to be highest since Asia crisis

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE BANKS' FOREIGN CURRENCY deposit units posted a 9.4-percent increase in assets last year to $20.7 billion over a year ago.

It was the highest FCDU figure yet since the Asian currency turmoil erupted in 1997, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported.

Deposit liabilities continued to be the main source of funding, accounting for a hefty 79.4 percent of the total FCDU resources.

These were valued at $16.46 billion, or 5.9 percent higher than the $15.54 billion posted the previous year.

The FCDU system's asset preference shifted in favor of marketable securities, with the net proportion held in this type of instrument almost doubling to 32.9 percent from 18 percent the year before.

Investments over loans

In contrast, the net share of investments held to maturity declined to 14.6 percent from 34.3 percent last year, partly due to tighter accounting guidelines issued by the BSP for investments in debt and equity securities.

Still wary of the impact of the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, the banks' FCDU system preferred investments over loans, as indicated by the decline in the share of net loan portfolio to total assets to 12.7 percent from 16.9 percent the year before.

Prior to the 1997 crisis, a lot of banks aggressively lent in foreign currencies, particularly to real estate companies, encouraged by the stable exchange rate and the lack of reserve requirement on FCDU deposits.

Cautious

When the currency turmoil erupted, many companies that were saddled with heavy dollar debts had to seek restructuring or even court-assisted rehabilitation.

The banks' FCD units have since grown cautious over lending.

Major beneficiary industries of the system's lending activity were: the manufacturing sector, with a 37.8-percent (or $1.08 billion) share of the system's total loans; the electricity, gas and water sector, with a 21.4-percent (or $613.5 million) share; and the transportation, storage and communication sector, with a 12.4-percent (or $ 356.7 million) share.

The FCDU system's exposure to these three industries made up 71.6 percent of the total FCDU loans as of end-December 2005.

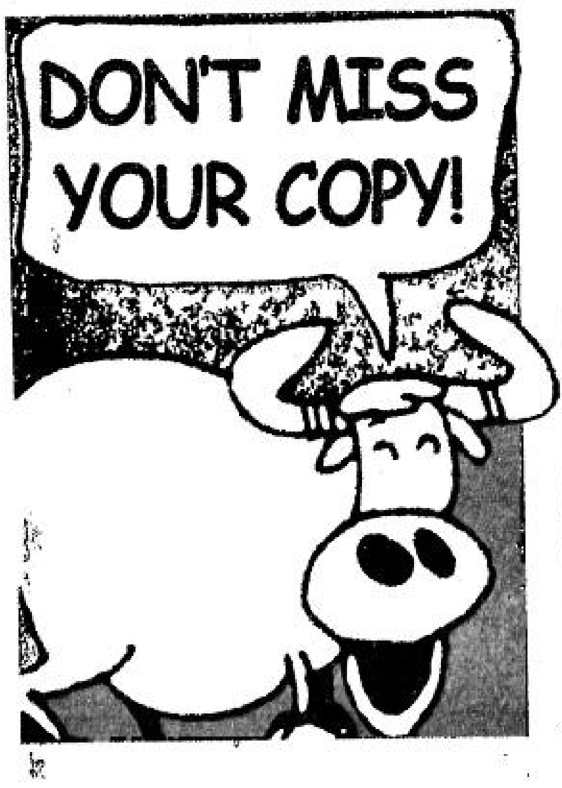
Ratio drop

Meanwhile, the BSP reported that FCDUs posted enhanced loan and asset quality for the period.

Both non-performing loans (NPLs) and non-performing assets (NPAs) ratios dropped to 1.8 percent (from 6.3 percent last year) and to 0.7 percent (from 2.4 percent), respectively.

The FCDU system reported $734 million in consolidated net income after tax at end-2005, 25 percent higher than the $587.4 million net earnings in 2004.

"The improvement was attributed to the simultaneous increase in net interest income and non-interest income," the BSP said. "This dampened the effect of the 2.4 percent hike in operating expenses to $148.3 million."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Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

THE MERCEDES-BENZ taxi of Grigorios Sachinidis

This Benz 'jumped' over the moon

Not once, not twice, not even three times

By Tessa R. Salazar

TALK ABOUT A cash cow that has "jumped" over the moon four times. A Greek taxi driver's beloved and durable Mercedes-Benz 240D has followed its master every step of the way for over 2.85 million miles (over 4.5 million km).

In Greek Drachma taxi fare, that would be incalculable, the number of stories exchanged between driver and passengers untold.

The achievement of Gregorio Sachinidis' Benz is such that it has been given its own place at the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart, Germany. Now, lovers of automobiles can marvel at this 1976 model, which has outlasted even its lunar rocket counterparts. Still in perfect running condition but now held in perpetual proud pose, this car that never gave up has been honored by its own German creators.

Like a man on the moon

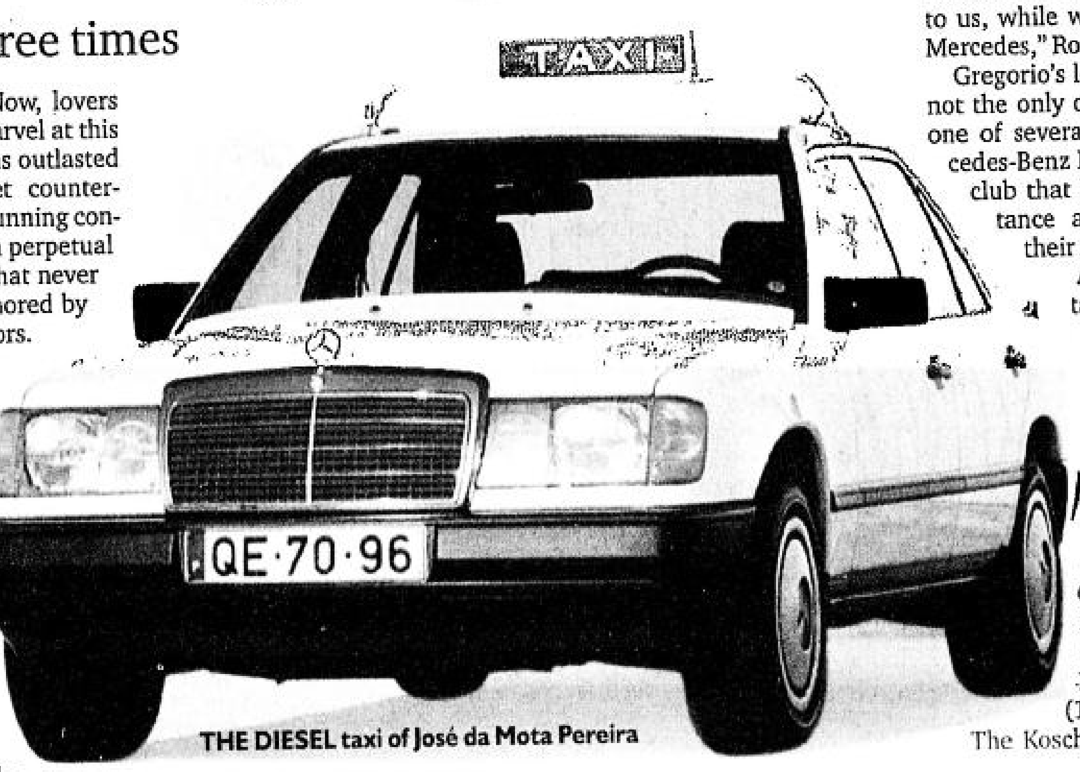
In an interview with this writer in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Stefan Roehrig—head of the Mercedes-Benz Classic Car Club International—feels like a man on the moon with this acquisition.

"We call it the Mileage Millionaire Program. We look for cars with more than 1 million miles (1.6 million km). We ask them to turn over the car to us, while we get them a new Mercedes," Roehrig says.

Gregorio's long-lasting Benz is not the only one of its kind, but one of several cars of the Mercedes-Benz Mileage Millionaire club that have gone the distance and beyond under their fan belts.

Another long-distance runner acquired by the Mercedes-Benz Museum Collection in Stuttgart is a 1970 280SE Sedan. The car's original owners, George and Luzstella Koschel of Orange County, California, bought it 35 years ago and drove it for 1,019,000 miles (1,630,400 km).

The Koschels got their 280SE in Germany as a European delivery vehicle. In exchange for the "million miles of memories," Roehrig has offered the 2005 CLK 320 Cabriolet to the couple. When the Koschels eventually get their CLK Cabriolet, you can bet they'll want to log in another seven-digit number in the odometer.



THE DIESEL taxi of José da Mota Pereira

Romantic backdrop

Here in the Philippines, the moon may not be the figurative destination, but a part of a romantic backdrop that includes an elegant Mercedes-Benz.

Greg Ching arranges wedding limousine services for couples—a package that includes a chauffeured ride in a Mercedes-Benz Adenauer. The Adenauer is a popular choice as a bridal car—for those who can afford it.

According to the business owner, it exudes the sense of luxury and indulgence one would expect from old-world charm. It is also the perfect car to dress up in bridal ornamentation.

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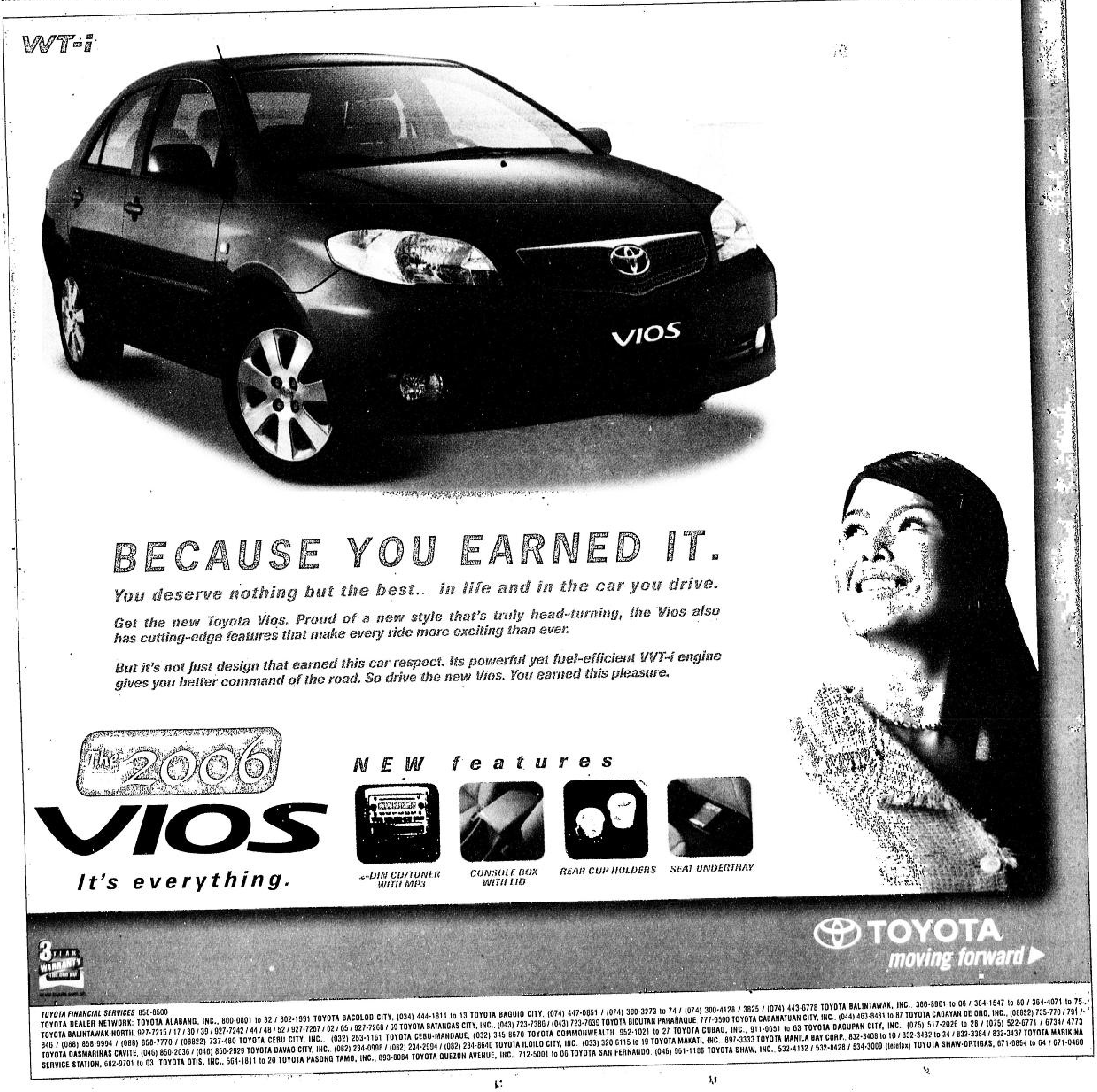

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Hyundai E. Rodriguez named dealer of the year

By Charles E. Buban

HYUNDAI E. RODRIguez (Wheels Inc.) added the prestigious Hyundai Asia Resources Inc. (Hari) 2005 Dealer of the Year trophy to its growing list of achievements.

The latest award capped the two earlier recognition it also received from the exclusive distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the Philippines: the 2005 Best in Sales and 2005 Best in After Sales trophies.

Prestigious award5

In receiving the award, an elated Ramon Goh, president of Hyundai E. Rodriguez, said: "We are delighted to win. It is a prestigious award and this is a tremendous achievement for all parties involved. Having worked hard in maintaining our leadership in unit sales for the past four years as well as ensuring a consistent customer satisfaction ratings show an enormous level of commitment from the company's sales, service and parts as well as the rest of our departments."

Hari said the Quezon City dealership played a big part in Hyundai's impressive 103 percent sales growth in 2005 in the Philippines, which translated to 4,924 vehicles sold.

Key to their success

Goh cited their multistory dealership on E. Rodriquez Sr. Avenue as key to their success considering it can service 50 vehicles at any given time and its well stocked parts and accessories department can immediately meet any requests from customers.

He also attributed his company's success to their group's years of experience considering that their dealership was already distributing Hyundai vehicles long before Hari was established as Hyundai's official representative here.

Goh said he is delighted with the recognition provided by the award but added modestly: "It's all in a day's work here at the dealership, however I would like to congratulate our entire team for their sterling efforts in making this possible."

HYUNDAI
TRIX

HYUNDAI dealership on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue

Republic of the Philippines
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES SYSTEM
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed proposals will be received by the System Bids and Awards Committee, University of the Philippines System, Quezon Hall, Diliman, Quezon City, not later than 3:00 p.m. on April 11, 2006 at the System Supply and Property Management Office (SPMO-SYS) for the selection of Internet Service Provider.

Total approved budget ceiling : P4,000,000.00

The pre-bid conference will be held on March 29, 2006 at 3:00 p.m., SPMO-SYS, UP Diliman, Quezon City. Bid documents at P4,500.00 per set are available starting March 24, 2006 at the SPMO-SYS. Contact person: Eduardo G. Sabat, Telefax No. 926-4919, email address: egsabat@up.edu.ph

The University of the Philippines System reserves the right to reject any or all bids, as well as to waive any defect or informality required in such bids, and to accept such bids as may be considered most advantageous to the University.

(Sgd.) CYNTHIA GRACE C. GREGORIO
Chair, System Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – March 22 & 29, 2006)

PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY
PORT DISTRICT OFFICE OF VISAYAS
CIP COMPLEX, SERGING OSMEÑA BLVD.,
NORTH RECLAMATION AREA, CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES
TEL. NO. (032) 2323401 to 04, FAX NO. (032) 2321980
Email: pdovisayas@ppavis.com • Website: www.ppavis.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY, Port District Office - Visayas, through its Bids and Awards Committee - Engineering Project (BAC-EP), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract : **Proposed Port Development Project**
Location : Brgy. Tiana, Limasawa Island, Southern Leyte
Major Items of Work : 1.) Construction of RC Pier (6.0 x 24.0 m)
2.) Construction of RoRo Ramp (9.0 x 9.0 m)
3.) Reclamation Area (6.0 x 18.0 m)
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P13,384,332.63
Source of Funds : PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration : Two Hundred Twenty (**220**) Calendar Days
CAB Registration : **Medium A** "Port, Harbor & Offshore Engineering"
Required Equipments :

1)	1 unit	Boom Truck (5.0 T)	- Owned
2)	4 units	Bar Cutter	- Owned
3)	4 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	- Owned
4)	4 units	Concrete Vibrator	- Owned
5)	2 units	Bar Bender	- Owned
6)	2 units	Welding Machine (150 Amp)	- Owned
7)	1 unit	Backhoe (0.70 cu.m.)	- Owned/Leased
8)	1 unit	Rock Grapple (2.0 cu.m.)	- Owned/Leased
9)	1 unit	Truckmounted Crane (3.50 T)	- Owned/Leased
10)	1 unit	Plate Compactor	- Owned/Leased
11)	1 unit	Road Roller/Compactor 10.0 T)	- Owned/Leased
12)	1 unit	Road Grader (125 hp)	- Owned/Leased
13)	1 unit	Crane Barge (DWT 450T)	- Owned/Leased
14)	1 unit	Drop Hammer (2T)	- Owned/Leased
15)	1 unit	Diesel Hammer (33.0 T)	- Owned/Leased

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB license and registration particulars applicable to the type and cost of the contract to be bid, have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract, must have completed **50% for Major Items of Work** (indicated above) on contract/projects with similar in nature and complexity to the contract to be bid within the past **Five (5) years** immediately preceding the publication of this invitation; with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and meet the other eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Statement. Applications for eligibility, as well as the preliminary examination of bids, will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" criteria. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184, a contract will be awarded only to the lowest calculated and responsive bidder.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	April 05-11, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	April 05-17, 2006
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	April 24, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas, CIP Complex, Serging Osmeña Blvd., North Reclamation Area, Cebu City upon their submission of a LOI, photocopy of PCAB License and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of **P1,100.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P2,500.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier.

The Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to the award of contract without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **JAMES J. GANTALAO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - March 22 & 29, 2006)

Isuzu's 'terrific triad'

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

THERE'S A HIDDEN, HAPPY mix of venom inside the Isuzu Philippines Corp. nowadays. No, a terrific triumvirate, I should rather say.

Or maybe, right chemistry?

Art Balmadrid, Timmy Naval and Ronald "Isuzu Joe" Baladad now compose the Isuzu triad that, for their first major breakthrough in international media relations, scored a motoring coup of sorts that should earn them purple hearts of valor. A badge of courage.

And that's because, for one, they hauled off last week a group of journalists to Bangkok that read like a "Who's Who?" in the motoring media segment; it was an assembly whose total IQs alone would be hard to match in the years to come. The majority of the top motoring editors of the land were there, mind you, not to mention topnotch reporters and columnists.

For another, the trio outdid themselves in playing host to a pack of media persons with unique characters and suasions, some bordering on the sordid, if not surreal; one false move—even a minor one—and things could have blown out into smithereens. Not one ever happened—thank God.

* * *

The trip was for the 27th Bangkok International Motor Show. Timmy Naval introduced the journalists to IOT (Isuzu Operations of Thailand) officials led by IOT top honcho Ryo Sakata and Ms Panatda "Brilliant Mind" Chennavasin "the best of the best" from the Philippine motoring media. Ray Butch "Elvis" Gamboa, flexing his French, described the group "crème a la crème." Well done, housemate.

But Art, Timmy and IJ (Isuzu Joe, who else?) could not have done it without the superb backstopping job of Mario Ojales, Ellen Dizon and Joy Andrada. Take a bow, please? It's not easy herding journalists sprinkled with delegates endowed with, uh-oh, near-autistic tendencies and, although it was their first time to stage the act, Art, Timmy and IJ, passed their baptism of fire with A-OK, 5-star marks. Cheers!

* * *

Isuzu, as usual, essayed a major role in the Bangkok International Motor Show, running up to April 2 and which has attracted an impressive array of international cast once more that included Bentley and Lexus.

Accentuated in the motor show long regarded as South East Asia's numero uno was Isuzu's unprecedented market leadership in the commercial vehicle segment for 23 successive years. This record-shattering achievement was now anchored on Isuzu's amazing D-Max pickup.

In just a time span of a little over three years in the Thai market, the Isuzu D-Max pickup has sold a total of more than 500,000 units. No other brand has scored that amazing feat in Thailand, prompting Ms Panatda, director of Tri Petch Isuzu Sales Co. Ltd. and senior vice president of IOT Co. Ltd., to say that Thailand today is the undisputed "Pickup Capital of the World."

Said Sakata-san, Tri Petch Isuzu president, of this Isuzu phenomenon: "Because the voice of the market is the voice of the people, we always listen to the people. It's been 50 years or so that Isuzu has been listening to the voice of the market—the people. That's one of our major secrets of success."

If Isuzu, whose D-Max is the No. 1 pickup in the Philippines the last two years, proceeds to also emerge No. 1 in the country in the next 23 years, I'll no longer be surprised one bit.

As Mao Zedong said, "Without the people, any revolution can't win."

* * *

QUOTE ME. The P3,000 we pay when availing of our comprehensive insurance is nothing but a highway robbery.

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net.

The Nissan Murano makes its way into RP market

THIS NISSAN SUV CAUGHT THE imagination of vehicle buyers in North America, Europe and Asia. And today, the Nissan Murano makes its way into the Philippine market.

The Murano is a dream vehicle to many. But it appeals very strongly toward the independent minded, who are actively engaged in trying new things, with a strong sense of self, and have great pride in their ongoing achievements.

"Finally, the Nissan Murano has arrived in the Philippines, and we are not only speaking here about an ordinary SUV, for the Murano is an SUV that is very unique in many ways, particularly its styling and its urban character," explained Dennis Chang, AVP for Sales and Marketing at Nissan Motor Phils. Inc. (NMPI).

THE MURANO appeals very strongly toward the independent minded.

Inspired by Murano glass

The Nissan Murano was inspired by Murano glass, which up to this day remains one of the most elegantly sculpted glasses crafted in the island of Murano near Venice, in Italy.

Nissan's new SUV has nicely flowing lines over geometric curves, resulting in a beautifully sculpted exterior. It is also highly functional since it provides adequate room for five people, and boasts of excellent aerodynamics.

The Murano's sloping hood does not obstruct forward vision, and makes it easier for the driver to see what is closely ahead.

It has well-designed leather seats, well-insulated indoor paneling, genuine aluminum accents, adequate head, shoulder and leg room.

And with its front and side curtain airbags, the Murano provides a very high degree of safety for its passengers.

Engine power

Underneath its hood is the VQ engine, which is the only engine series to be listed in Ward's 10 Best Engine's List for 12 straight years.

The Murano's 3.5-liter VQ engine, equipped with Continuously Variable-valve Timing Control (CVTC) and Nissan Induction Control System (NICS), produces 234 PS at 6000 rpm and 32.4 kg-m of torque at 3600 rpm.

The Murano's driving pleasure is enhanced with a switch-operated electric sunroof and the Bose audio system with 7 speakers and 6-disc CD changer.

The air-conditioning system controls are easy to modulate with its large dials. The rear passengers are also provided with aircon vents.

MURANO

Conference to focus on expressways' safety

TOP TOLLWAY OPERATORS AND transportation experts will discuss the safety of the country's expressway during the 4th Road Safety Conference of the Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) at the Dusit Hotel tomorrow.

AAP Vice President Johnny Angeles said numerous accidents usually happen on the expressways during summer mainly because the vehicle volume more than doubles.

He said major steps should be taken to prevent or at least minimize these accidents.

Attendees

Expected to attend the conference are officials of the Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC), the operator of the South Luzon Expressway; Citra, the operator of the Metro Manila Skyway and the Batangas Star Tollway; the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), operator of the North Luzon Expressway; and the Public Estates Authority (PEA), operator of the Coastal Road.

Professors from the University of the Philippines' Center for Transportation Studies will again serve as moderators for the event.

The Road Safety Conference series is an advocacy of the AAP, the oldest and most respected auto club in the country, and industry leader Toyota Motor Philippines Corp.

The most coveted trophy

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

TOMORROW NIGHT AT THE Rockwell Tent in Makati, the most coveted trophy for a car will be awarded to the Car of the Year-Philippines (Coty-P) 2005 winner. Before this, over a span of six weekends this January and February at a closed-off area in the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club, Antipolo, 54 production models that were on sale in the Philippines from Sept. 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2005 underwent rigid quantitative and qualitative tests.

The tests were conducted by members of the Car Awards Group Inc. (Cagi), an independent, nonprofit, nonstock association of 40 motoring journalists from more than two dozen print, television, radio and online media outfits. Their purpose: to recognize the achievement and encourage the pursuit of higher engineering, design, performance and safety standards by car manufacturers.

Winners

The best-in-class winners in 11 major categories are the finalists vying for the top overall trophy. The 11 categories, in which the price factor is taken into account, are mini/subcompacts, compact cars, executive sedans, luxury sedans, ultra-luxury sedans, entry-level sport utility vehicles, luxury SUVs, ultra-luxury SUVs, entry-level MPVs (multipurpose vehicles including AUVs and minivans), luxury MPVs and pickup trucks.

The test results were tallied and audited by Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. (SGV), the country's top accounting firm, and will not be released until tomorrow night.

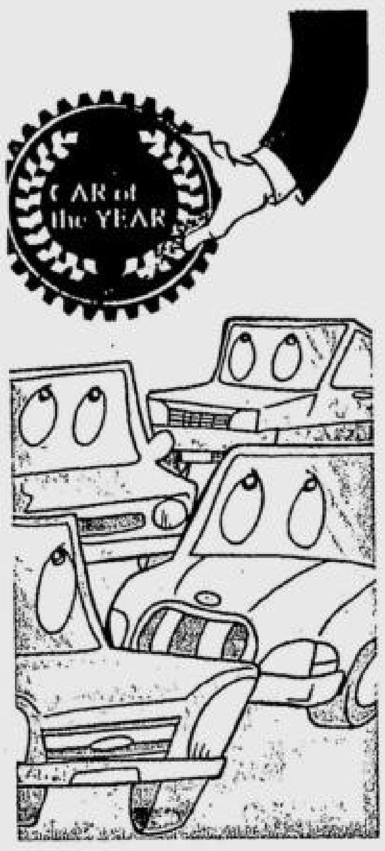
Tomorrow's Coty-P Awards Night marks the second time that this annual awarding ceremony will be held by Cagi. In mid-2004, less than a dozen motoring journalists, inspired by the Car of the Year contests in the United States, Europe, Japan and other countries, organized Cagi to launch the same concept here.

Introducing Coty in the Philippines was tough, given the group's lack of resources, the need to learn from hard experience along the way how to successfully put together the whole thing. Plus the firm resolve of Cagi, from day one, not to solicit or accept funding or sponsorships from car manufacturers, distributors or dealers in order to establish and protect Coty-P's integrity and independence.

Growing

Despite the cynicism of a few industry players and motorheads, the Coty-P idea soon caught on, what with funding for the testing sessions generously provided by Automobile Association Philippines (AAP), the country's oldest and only national auto club. As a result, the membership roster of Cagi continues to grow and Coty-P is gaining a wider base of support and enthusiasm, bolstering the hopes of Cagi's founders that Coty-P shall eventually win nationwide recognition and prominence over the years.

Tomorrow's Coty-P Awards Night is made possible by the continued support in cash and kind of sponsors who signed on last year and new sponsors this year: Worldbex Services International (organizer of the Manila Auto Show, where the 2005 Coty-P winner will be displayed), Rockwell Land Corp., Standard Insurance Co., Manila North Tollways Corp., AAP, SGV, Bridgestone Tires (Philippine Allied Corp., sole distributor), Petron, Forest Hills Golf & Country Club, Federal Express Corp., BPI Family Savings Bank, Fusion R Motorsports, and media partners Philippine Daily Inquirer, Hot Wire, Auto Extreme and motioncars.com.



Cooperating

Of course, without the cooperation extended by car manufacturers/distributors in terms of lending Cagi their products (with full tanks, at that) for the Coty-P test sessions, neither would tomorrow's Awards Night have been possible. Alphabetically listed, the cooperating industry players are Audi (PGA Cars Inc.), BMW Phils., Chevrolet (GM Automobiles Phils.), Chrysler and Dodge (CATS Motors Inc.), Ford Group Phils. Inc., Honda Cars Phils. Inc., Hyundai Asia Resources Inc., Isuzu Phils. Corp., Kia (Columbian Motors Corp.), Mazda, Mercedes-Benz (CATS) Mitsubishi Motors Phils., Nissan Motor Phils. Inc., Toyota Motor Phils. Corp. and Volvo (Viking Cars Inc.)

In short, for car manufacturers as well as car lovers and the motoring media at seven o'clock tomorrow night, all roads lead to the 2nd Car of the Year Awards at the Rockwell Tent in Makati City.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Filling up can be hazardous to your wealth. (warning sign at gas station)

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

THE MERCEDES-BENZ S-Class of the Koschel family

This Benz 'jumped' over the moon

From page B2-1

Eternal commitment

According to a Mercedes-Benz car group document, Ching's Adenauer demonstrates that Mercedes-Benz symbolizes an eternal commitment, a special relationship.

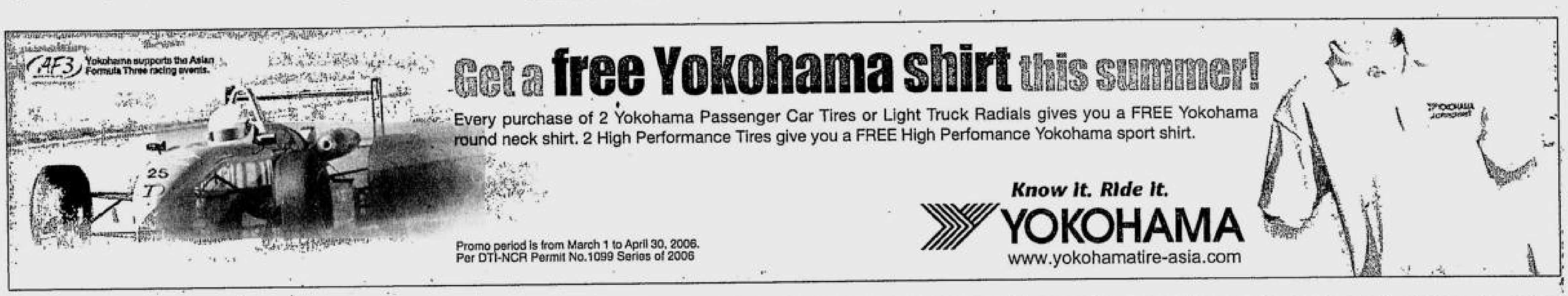
The classic car museum in Stuttgart is also a shelter for MB cars owned by kings. "We have in our collection cars previously owned by the king of Jordan, Thailand, Spain and more. These are very rare cars. If they want to have them restored, they send them to this museum," Roehrig says.

CATS Motors Inc., exclusive Mercedes-Benz distributor in the Philippines, has service records of the classic cars that they regularly service in their centers. It may soon be on the lookout for long-running cars. Its service centers are monitoring cars of MB owners who might be racking up the miles.

When asked about the monetary value of these long-running cars, Roehrig says it would not be as high as, for example, rare cars (the kind of which limited numbers are ever produced), or cars with "special technical features" such as the SL, or rides of famous personalities such as Ringo Starr's Mercedes 190 SL Cabriolet and John Lennon's 1970 Mercedes-Benz 600 Pullman.

Starr's SL, incidentally, had logged in only 23,300 miles (37,280 km) before being turned over to the Stuttgart Museum.

That's just a weekend trip to the opera house for Sachinidi's 240D.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YARIS: version 2.0 of the local Echo hatch, 1.5-liter engine a godsend

AVANZA: this compact wagon is aimed straight at the heart of the AUV segment

Bangkok: 3 shows and a thousand pickups

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IT IS EASY TO THINK THAT ONE has to travel quite far to experience things that are truly dissimilar from one's own day-to-day existence. It is but logical that a trip, say to Europe, will yield a very distinct and different set of memories and images from that of our usual nine to five existences.

The short hop to Thailand for the 27th Bangkok International Motor Show held a lot of possibilities but would probably not hold anything new and exciting for this jaded motoring tourist. Luckily, this assessment was wrong.

3 shows

For the record, I saw three shows during the duration of my stay. The first was purely cultural, involved the proverbial "cast of thousands" and focused on the history of Siam. The second show was a little bit more interesting. Let's just say it was acrobatic and concerned with human anatomy and balloon bursting—using what might probably be the happiest blowgun in the world.

Final and foremost, of course, was the motor show held at the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Center (Bitec) exposition facility in the Bangna district. With the expo theme emphasizing friendliness to the ecology and happiness, one can imagine this writer salivating at the notion of seeing hybrids and alternative fuel vehicles.

My personal target was the current model Toyota Prius with my ultimate goal of driving said hybrid. Unfortunately, the only Prius at the show was a cut-away model at the massive Toyota display area. Sharing center stage with the i-swing personal mobility solution and the Fine-T Fuel Cell Hybrid concept, the second generation Prius serves as the first step into a fossil fuel-free motoring future. I guess I'll have to wait a little more before I finally get to drive and review one.

Toyota display

Personal highlights from the Toyota display at Bitec were three locally unavailable two-box (wagon, MPV or hatchback, no trunk) designs. The Indonesian-built Avanza compact wagon might very well serve the transport needs of many Filipino families, businesses and FX operators. Retailing for only 539,000 Baht, value for money is a clear strength of this AUV sized product.

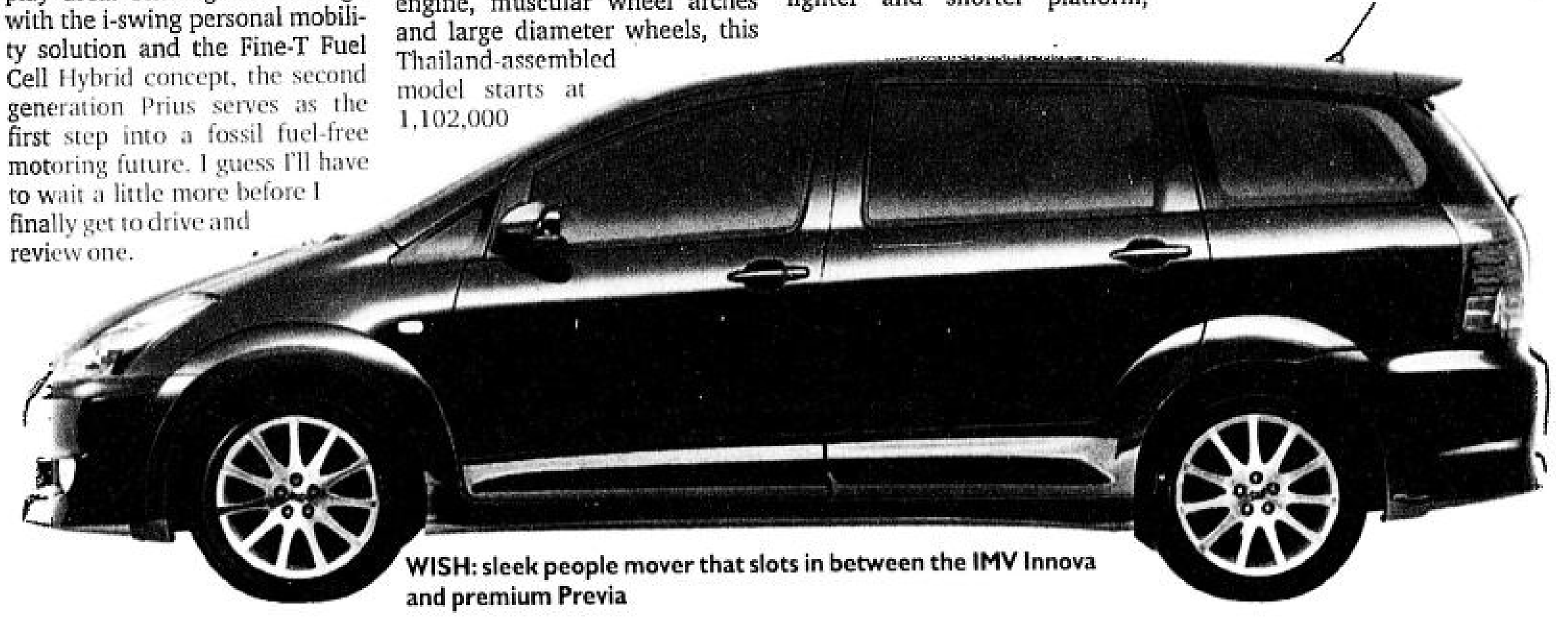
On the other side of the pricing spectrum is the sporty Wish MPV. Complete with a 2.0-liter VVT-i engine, muscular wheel arches and large diameter wheels, this Thailand-assembled model starts at 1,102,000 Baht and can be had with HID lamps and even larger tire and wheel packages as options. Also on hand was the reincarnated Yaris/Vitz/Echo sport hatch. The MK.2 Yaris is sold in Thailand with the same 1NZ-FE 1.5-liter VVT-i engine that is found in the Philippine-released Vios subcompact sedan. Imagine the 109-bhp of the Vios in a smaller, lighter and shorter platform, something worth keeping our collective fingers crossed for.

Samrong production facility

Already quite contented with the models I had seen at the Toyota exhibit, I was quite honestly about to call it a day, owing to the oppressive heat and humidity that characterize Bangkok in late March but I was not about to miss a peak into the heart of Toyota Motor Thailand's Samrong production facility. Just how big is this vehicle production facility? The actual physical size of the real estate escapes me but the sheer volume of vehicle output does not.

The Samrong plant produces 1,000 IMV units (Hilux pickups) a day in two shifts. That's almost 360,000 vehicles a year or 10 times the production of the Sta. Rosa facility of Toyota Motors Philippines. Wow! Two-door, extended car, full cab, 4x2, 4x4—you name it, they make it at Samrong. So diverse are the variations of the Hilux units at the plant that I even spied a 4.0-liter V6 engine variant bound for markets further abroad.

In the end, the trip to this year's Bangkok show with the visit to the massive facility at Samrong was eye-opening, to say the least. It makes one ask the question, "Why is this not the market situation in the Philippines?" Both nations suffered through the regional financial crisis of the late '90s, but it seems as if our neighbor to the West has truly left us by leaps and bounds. "Siam Niramit," as our Thai guide would say, amazing Thailand indeed.



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Mommy! Want to get a Travel Bag, FREE? See page C-3 EQ Dry

Class of 2006 *Part 2*

You've marched, you've partied—now what?

We know the days after graduation can be scary. But 2bU! will help you make those all-important post-graduation decisions.

Graduate school? Law school? Med school? If you're considering a return to campus, we've got you covered.

We also have a complete guide for jump-starting your career—from writing your resumé and wardrobe tips to the most common interview questions and the websites that will help you land the job you want.

And because you'll need all the ammo you can get when you step out into the real world, we have tips and stories from INQUIRER's Lifestyle Reporters—people who have graduated before you and have survived life after the big march.

Make us proud, graduates.

For non-graduates, we have stories on hot summer looks and on detoxifying after partying. And for your inner geeks, we have an article on the 22nd Mac World Conference and Expo, a review of the Sony DVD805 and the chance to win a Sony Walkman Bean.

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Si
Oui
Yes
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ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Mastering school

A rundown of the most popular and unusual graduate courses here and abroad

By Gmeleen Faye B. Tomboc
2bU! Correspondent

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL WOULD PROBABLY be the last thing on any fresh graduate's mind. Why spend the best years of your youth slaving away at some dusty library when you can already be in the "real world," walking down Ayala Avenue on your way to a power breakfast?

Graduate degrees offer many advantages, though. They may give you an advantage when applying for a job, broaden the knowledge and skills gained in your undergraduate degree, and boost your chances of promotion when you start working.

2bU! gives you the 411 on the most popular graduate courses here and abroad.

Masteral studies

In some industries, like in the academe, getting a Masters degree is a definite advantage. Josephine Garcia, 24, says her MS (Master of Science) Physics degree will be crucial when she starts work as a scientist and researcher. A future professor like Shelanee, 23, can also learn more effective teaching methods from her MA (Master of Arts) in Education.

A graduate degree is also useful if you want to have more specialized knowledge. Future UN diplomats may want to try Ateneo's MA in Political Science, Major in Global Politics. Techies may fancy an MS in Information Technology from De La Salle (DLSU).

If you simply want to venture into a new field, try these out-of this-world degrees from the University of the Philippines (UP): MA in Archaeological Studies, Master of Tropical Landscape Architecture, and even a Master in Physical Education. You can also go into Bioethics, Higher Religious Studies, Cultural Heritage Studies or even Canon Law at the University of Sto. Tomas (UST).

MASTERING/ C2

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From philosophy to journalism

By Cheche V. Moral

SHORTLY BEFORE I GRADUATED FROM college many years ago, a professor said in one of my classes that we, being graduates of the premier state university, could *demand* no less than that X-amount from our first employer. I left school soon after, no less naïve than four years earlier, believing just that.

It was the first of a series of rude awakenings for me when, landing my first job, I was told my paycheck would only be a third of that amount quoted by my college professor—before taxes.

I don't presume to know more than any of you, Class of 2006. But I was once like many of you—full of ideals, full of dreams, so full of myself. You see, while that big great party called school is said to prepare you for the world out there, in some ways it can also teach you grand ideas about yourself—and more often than not, sage truths. At least I did.

I left school believing I was smart and well-equipped to make the world bend over backward for me. I got a job on my first try even as, I smugly thought, I had no specific training (so, shoot me, Nietzsche, for majoring in philosophy!), no *laude* of any sort inscribed in my college diploma, no special skills to speak of. I, the worst student in the history of education, with a job, at age 20, in the INQUIRER! Darn, was I full of myself!

I felt mighty pleased with myself that I didn't *demand* higher pay (not that they'd have given me more, of course, I know that now). Never mind that it meant my parents would continue subsidizing my living expenses for till heaven knew when. (I didn't realize then how irresponsible and self-centered that thought was.) Besides, I said, it was a temporary job. It was merely a way out of my over-extended post-grad holiday. I would be out of here in a few months—again live off my folks, go back to school and get a law degree. Then I'll make real moolah.

Out here, I soon found out, it's a level playing field. It's true, in a way, that you have an (unfair?) advantage if you're a product of a top university. But in truth, it doesn't mean you're any better than the next guy. If you don't work your butt off to prove your worth, then you can be just as dispensable as everyone else.

Surprises

It can also be very daunting when the life as you planned it goes off-course. So be ready for surprises.

I never imagined I would like my "temporary job," even more the prospect of a career doing—I didn't realize sooner—what I loved best. I was grossly unprepared. I had to learn everything on the job, and I'm not ashamed to say I'm still learning.

The so-called real world is quite humbling. To this day, proving I can just be as competent as anyone who trained four long years to be journalist is a constant struggle. Am I anywhere near succeeding? I don't know.

I always joke that I never dreamed I'd be making a living writing about hemlines—after years of struggling to make sense of the writings of Descartes, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein. But the job of a lifestyle reporter isn't as easy and glamorous as some impressionable wannabe writers might think. It's real work. You're remiss, and your boss will have your head for lunch.

You cover fashion shows, but it doesn't mean you're expected to dress couture. You don't get free couture (which isn't saying you don't get offered, but what would taking it say about you?) and heaven knows your reporter's paycheck can't afford it. Do you beat yourself over it? No.

You're not the people you cover. Anyone who hopes to be a lifestyle reporter *should* remember that. Those who forget are the ones who make it so hard to get the respect this job deserves. Whatever industry you end up in, you don't want to be one of those people. That, I think, you needn't a journalism school (or any school, for that matter) to teach you.

Okay, so it wasn't until several years into the job that I finally got a paycheck that's worth as much as what my UP professor said. This time, I *earned* it.

Often I still struggle to fight the urge to buy that new pair of shoes, but I stop myself because, I remember, I have to pay rent. A get-together with old friends takes weeks of planning, but at the last minute I take a rain check because, again, I have a deadline.

Rules change once you're employed. Playing hooky at anytime is no longer an option. It's quite unlike school when you can leave your chances of passing to chance, and with a few tears can get your parents to forgive you for that red mark—and by day's end still get your allowance. You're being paid to do a job, and you have to earn it. It's called responsibility.

Don't be a big baby and expect Mom to be there to bail you out each time you blow your entire paycheck on that designer handbag, because she won't be—and for your own sake, she shouldn't be.

The party's over, graduates. Welcome to life.

E-mail the author at cmoral@inquirer.com.ph

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The perfect job does not exist

By Vangie Baga-Reyes

TO THE GRADUATES OF 2006, MY message is short and sweet.

The world out there is a dense jungle of predators and pitfalls. It lurks like a vicious beast waiting to corrupt whatever stupid idealism the university has instilled in you.

After graduation, your day starts with finding a job, which, by the way, is very demeaning every step of the way. People who interview applicants often act as if they own the company. Believe me. They make you wait long lines and ask for photocopies of your papers but never allow you to use theirs. They never realize that you took long, sweaty jeepney or bus rides on your Sunday dress and high heels just to get to their cramp, stuffy-smelling offices. If the office is big, clean and swanky, chances are people there are all the more rude and condescending.

Once you land a job, don't expect to be spoon-fed by your officemates, let alone your boss. Anticipate that the persons in the next cubicles are wicked witches because they most likely are. The only people who would show sympathy are those who have been there for decades and got bypassed by promotions because they are too nice to be bosses.

By all probability, the boss is a tyrant with no regard for the feelings of people beneath him or her. That is especially true for highly competitive companies and considered leaders in the industry.

Unless you have rich parents, you should not expect to land the job of your dreams

In work, as in life, success and arrogance seem to go hand and in hand. Affectionate superiors like that of Erin Brockovich can only be found in companies that are not doing good. They are affectionate to make up for the lousy pay and benefit package they offer.

The rule of the thumb is do not stay in your job if the pay sucks and you hate doing your work. If you despise your job but gets well-compensated, that's good enough reason not to quit. If you love your job but don't get paid enough, I'd understand if you hang on. Forget about having a big paycheck for a job you love doing. It doesn't exist in this world, I think.

I hope I have imparted valuable insights somehow, because I don't want you to feel bad after struggling hard to finish college. Oh, and by the way, this message does not apply to rich kids who either own the company or have parents who are well-connected.

Lastly, please don't take things too seriously if you want to enjoy retirement.

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

Mastering school

From page C1

The possibilities are endless, and we're not even talking about degrees you can get abroad yet. Singapore Management University offers a Masters in Wealth Management, where you can hone your skills investing other people's billions. If funding is a problem, scholarships abound on the Internet. For instance, www.britishcouncil.org gives the lowdown on studying in UK for free.

MBA

Those cut out for the business world may take a Master in Business Administration (MBA). This course is highly interactive and students are required to discuss and give reports on case studies everyday. Allot two years if you intend to be a full-time MBA student at schools like the Asian Institute of Management.

However, you can't start your MBA immediately after graduation. For instance, UP requires one-year work experience for full-time students.

If an MBA is too general for you, you can opt for an MS in Financial Engineering at DLSU, a Master in Business and Health from Ateneo, or an MS in Advertising from UST.

Law

Aspiring attorneys have no choice but to go back for four years of law school. A note of warning though: It's not as easy as the movie, "Legally Blonde," portrays it. Intense studying, good speaking skills and enough self-confidence to argue with terror teachers are required. Finally, law students have to pass the bar, which spans four consecutive Sundays. Check out the programs at UP, Ateneo, San Beda and UST. If you're also planning to get an MBA degree, hit two birds with one stone by entering the JD-MBA program of FEU and DLSU. If you already have a law degree and want to specialize more, UST offers an MA and PhD in law, which are the oldest graduate programs in law in the country and which have graduated outstanding jurists.

Med school

If you've always wanted to be a doctor, head to UST, UP-Manila, University of the East, Far Eastern University or St. Luke's. Compared to law studies, med school is unusually expensive. You'll soon understand why a doctor charges P500 for a five-minute consultation. Med schools can charge as much as P70,000 per semester.

The road to becoming a doctor is also unusually long. Those lucky enough to hurdle the National Medical Admission Test will spend four years in med school, then one year as interns. After taking the board exams, they can now be general practitioners, or proceed to a 3-5 year residency. After taking yet another exam, only then can they be called specialists (like pediatricians or OB-gynes). Some go on to fellowship to gain even more specialized knowledge.

Tina Mateo, 24, who is now in her fourth year at UP, acknowledges that med school can be "toxic" (med school jargon for extremely demanding). But as Ryan, 28, puts it, being a doctor can be a form of service to the country.

To work or not to work

Now that you've decided on what degree to take, will you be studying full-time or part-time?

Becoming a full-time student straight after graduation is recommended if you don't want to lose your enthusiasm for studying. Once you start earning your own money, you might find it hard to go back to being just a student. In fact, better if you start your masters right away so you don't forget those mind-boggling equations in chemistry or mathematics.

Some argue that it's better to work first before going back to school. For business courses, prior work experience is a must so you can have something meaningful to contribute to class discussions.

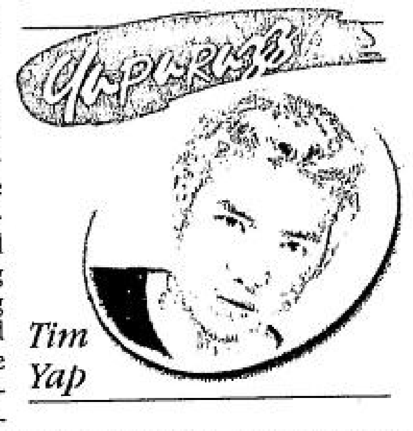
The supermen and superwomen among us may choose to work while studying. If your studies are related to your work, you can immediately apply the things you're learning. Be prepared to sacrifice your weekends and gimmick nights, though. To make things a little easier, ask your boss if you can work on a flexi-time basis, like what Teejaye, a 24-year-old MBA student, did.

Combining work and studies may be easier if you get your masters degree online. You need not commute to school because you can attend classes and submit coursework online. The UP Open University (www.upou.org) offers distance-education courses, or you can surf the Net for thousands of degrees available abroad.

Getting another degree may seem dreadful to new graduates who are already raring to take on the "real world." But who knows, it might just be your chance to redeem yourself if you had a lackluster performance in college. Also, with the ranks of the unemployed swelling by the minute, an MA or MS may just be your edge over everyone else. Happy studying!

E-mail the author at gmeleen@lycos.com

'Intox-detox': What to do after the party



Tim Yap

I AM NOT AS HIGH-MAINTENANCE AS I seem. Aside from my obsession with eye cream (to relieve the harm caused by late nights), I do not have a specific step-by-step regimen for healthy-looking skin, pre- or post-party. In fact, when people ask me what my skincare routine is, I just say, "shower with soap."

That "shower with soap" era ended last year, after I reached the quarter-life celebration, which meant me saying farewell to just leaving it all to "youth." I recall having a late-night taping with **John Pratts** (pre-"Big Brother" era), who I had seen earlier that same evening in an event. Fast-forward to non-stop working hours till sunrise at 5:30 a.m. and without sleep, he looked as fresh as morning dew.

"How can he look like that 48 hours straight?" I asked my seat mate between takes. "One word," he said. "Youth."

Youth (this section's main responsibility), I have observed, is obsessed with itself. Too many times I overhear people just past legal age exclaim, "oh my we're getting old." Thus hand in hand with the Google generation's obsession with speed comes their addiction to time-delay tactics (I'm an expert at this topic). What can I say? We want everything, right now.

By "time-delay tactics," I didn't mean to imply the passé Filipino time. I meant skincare, spas and other modes of pampering and detoxification. These days, partyphiliacs do the whole "intox-detox" faster than a grandfather clock on steroids.

I never used to like massages. I grew up giving my mother daily back rubs that would put her to sleep. At a young age, I knew I was a good masseur. But Someone Up There had other plans for me and put me here. If ever I do indulge in the once-in-a-blue-moon massage, it was meant to serve as research for me so that I can become a better massage therapist.

Lately though, I look forward to those spa binges at Urban Spa and the two-hour detox massage at Neo Spa. I am even thinking of trying the Pharoah's treatment at Boracay's famed Mandala, the perfect destination spot for that intox-detox, yin-yang-Yap! style.

Manual party

My "intox" came in the form of reading Manual's music issue and attending their launch at underground favorite MDC (Manila DJ Club at The Fort—for those who care to know). They called the night "Ear-gasm" because they feted the peeps who made music rock this side of town. Every major and up-and-coming musician had their attendance checked by Manual's **RJ Ledesma** and **Michealle Jao**, who are both jamming and banging their heads to make sure every issue is a sure winner.

Rock stars are experts at indulgence, and I sure had a multiple "ear-gasm" that night. One thing I noticed though—rock stars do not take care of their skin. Look at **Pepe Smith**. And many others. The rock-and-roll lifestyle forgot to add one more "R" word—refresh.

Except for **Rico Blanco** of Rivermaya, who shares my newfound affinity for Hollywood cult brand Zirh (pronounced "zhur"—men's skincare available at all Rustans' branches), almost everybody else looked tired and sweaty. Not that I am encouraging **Karl Roy** and **Bamboo** to cleanse, tone and moisturize, but it may serve them (and all of us) better when the time comes.

"My goal is to never have a face lift, or other surgery on my face, so I'm investing in skincare as early as now to combat premature aging," a skin-conscious male friend of mine, who is still scared to tell his dad that he goes to the derma, once confided. He doesn't need to be scared, though, because even Time magazine has acknowledged the fact that men have indeed become more vain, and are spending time, "primping and preening." "Because that's what women [and men] want."

On the Time Magazine cover was a man putting on mascara. Manual, your turn.

My new vain self

Detox for me was saying no to the free-flowing afternoon buzz of Freixenet sparkling wine and Rene Barbiers—as Lancôme launched its latest whitening product, Blanc Expert NeuroWhite, at M Café.

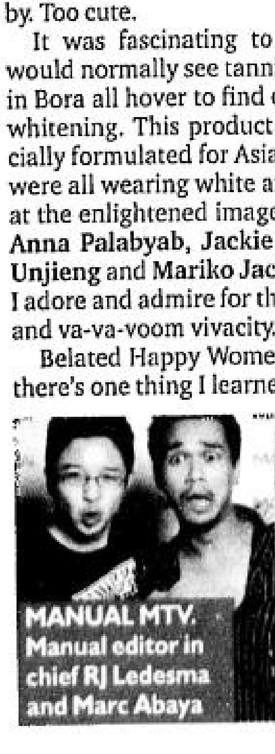
"Wow, this is the first time we're seeing each other in afternoon light," some guests exclaimed to each other as they traded *beso-besos*. L'Oreal's **Angelique Villaraza** and Aussie photog **Darren Tieste** brought their puppies. Cute. Another guest brought her baby. Too cute.

It was fascinating to see women who I would normally see tanning at Tali or bathing in Bora all hover to find out the latest on skin whitening. This product was, after all, especially formulated for Asian skin. Oh well, they were all wearing white anyway, as they gazed at the enlightened images of **Marta Araneta**, **Anna Palabyab**, **Jackie Antonio**, **Anna Cu-Unjieng** and **Mariko Jacinto**—women whom I adore and admire for their youth, luminosity and va-va-voom vivacity.

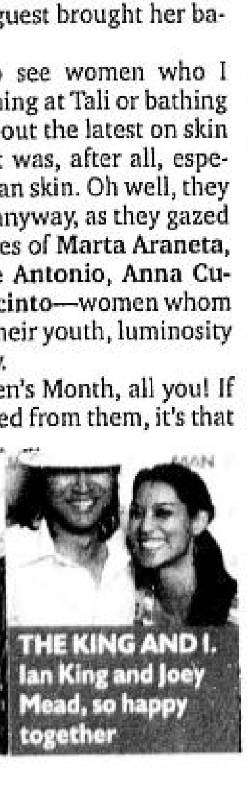
Belated Happy Women's Month, all you! If there's one thing I learned from them, it's that it really pays to invest in skincare.

These days, I am a renewed vain person. **Nicole Hernandez** hopped into our Addict Mobile summer campaign photo shoot looking so fresh, excited to share with me her belated birthday gift—a session of diamond peel. I, then, consulted Preview beauty editor **Agoo Bengzon** to get her go-signal, and I loved it! **Tina Tinio** introduced me to Shu Uemura cleansing oils and toners, and Dr. **Sheila Acosta** of Belo Medical Clinic is my new text mate.

Indulging in these new rituals is something alien for me, but I realize that the best after-party is one where you replenish yourself—whether with Berocca, vitamin C, a workout at the gym or hugging your puppy, whatever floats your boat—to make sure that you have enough to last for the next party, in the next coming years, and for generations to come.

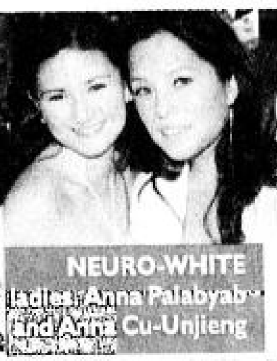


MANUAL MTV. Manual editor in chief RJ Ledesma and Marc Abaya



THE KING AND I. Ian King and Joey Mead, so happy together

WHITE HOT. Zeri Chan and Mariko Jacinto



NEURO-WHITE ladies: Anna Palabyab and Anna Cu-Unjieng

BLANC EXPERTS Marta Araneta, Karen Grupp and Marc Nelson at M Café

DONTCHA. Steak productions' Chris Aldaba and Viva Hot Babes' Sheree

MUSIC MANUAL. Ira Cruz and Bamboo

BEAUTY AND STYLE Karla Alindahao, Agoo Bengzon and Corine Alegre

> 'Adolescence stretches out like a night sky. Full of brave new worlds, black holes and long expanses of dreamy space, it seems to go on forever, yet disappears in a new dawn heartbeat.'
>
> —Skye Sherwin, iD Magazine

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MECHANICS:

I. Consumers may join by simply collecting packs with intact proof of purchase (POINTS) found on the packs of EQ Dry Baby Diapers. Points per packaging are as follows:

EQ DRY BABY DIAPER with cloth-like cover PACKAGING	LABEL POINTS
Mini Pack (4s)	1/4 point
Travel Pack (NB22s, S20s, M18s, L16s, XL14s)	1 point
Econo Pack (S40s, M36s, L32s, XL28s)	2 points
Jumbo Pack (S60s, M54s, L48s, XL42s)	3 points

II. Submit the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper wrappers together with the following information: sender's name, complete address where you want the premium item/s delivered, baby's name and age, telephone and/or cellphone numbers, signature of parent/guardian, and the desired premium item, written on a piece of paper and enclosed in an envelope. For hard-to-find locations, it would be best that landmark information of the address given be provided for easy reference.

III. Entries can be mailed or hand carried to:

"EQ Dry Travel Buddies"
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc.
31st Floor, Raffles Corporate Center
Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

OR

"EQ Dry Travel Buddies"
P.O. Box 14280 Pasig City

IV. Choose from any of the following collectible baby bag designs with the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper label points:

Premium Items	Points
Baby Travel Bags: (available designs) A. Pink and blue color combination B. Green and yellow color combination	10 points each
Animal Face Bags: (available designs) C. Cow D. Bear E. Penguin F. Dog	8 points each

IMPORTANT:
- *Only packs of EQ Dry with cloth-like cover (plain or white) will be accepted.*
- *Entries containing cut-out points will not be honored.*

V. The chosen premium item/s shall be delivered by LIBCAP Express to the address submitted by the consumer. In the event that the entry sender is not present during the time of delivery, a member of the sender's household may be asked to sign a proof of delivery and receive the premium item/s in behalf of the entry sender.

VI. Delivery lead times for the premium items are as follows (commencing upon receipt of "delivery orders" by the courier):

a. Metro Manila: within 2 to 3 days
b. Luzon & Visayas: within 2 to 4 days
c. Mindanao: within 3 to 5 days

VII. Premium items will be delivered until 60 days from end of promo period.

VIII. Consumers may join as many times as they want.

IX. Prizes are non-convertible to cash.

X. Entries thru mail are qualified 15 days after the promo period.

For more information, please visit www.jsunitrade.com

Happy si Baby, Happy si Mommy!

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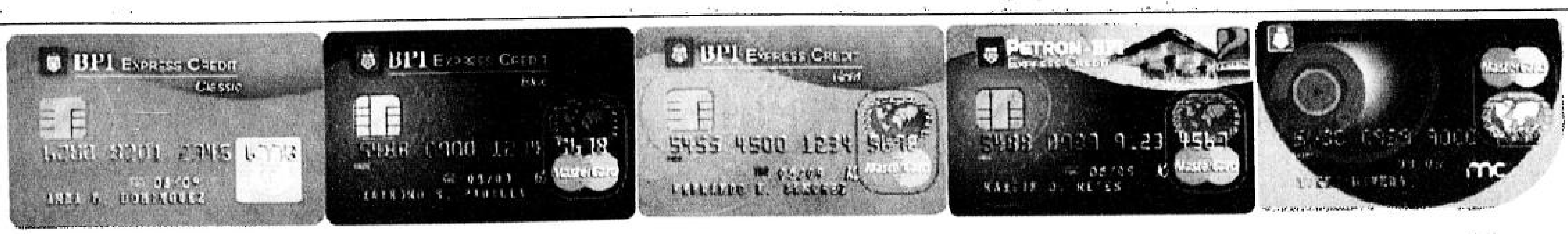

More Choices, Better Deals, Great Prizes in BPI REAL 0%

No Sweat Installment Madness

BPI Express Credit ushers in the sizzling summer months with the most awaited shopping event of the year, the BPI Installment Madness, from March 15 to April 2, 2006 at the Glorietta Ayala Center.

Now on its 37th staging, the BPI Installment Madness is famous for providing BPI Express credit cardholders the best value for their credit card with the greatest merchandising mix.

It features top brand home appliances, the most elegant furniture and home furnishings, indoor sports equipment, the hottest cellphones, and digital and electronic products. And the best thing about it is that credit cardholders can choose from an option of charging and converting their transactions on installment through the Special Installment Plan (S.I.P.) facility of their BPI Express Credit Cards with really low interest rates! It gives them up to 24 months to pay for their purchases at affordable installment rates.

S.I.P.
Special Installment Plan

The BPI Installment Madness is the perfect opportunity for BPI Express Credit cardholders to update their basic as well as luxury household needs, upgrade their cellphones and gadgets, and purchase their long-wished-for cameras and computers.

Add to that a fabulous mix of instant freebies everyday and the BPI Installment Madness is surely one shopping event one shouldn't miss.

That's not all. BPI Express Credit cardholders who use their BPI Express Credit Classic, Express Credit Blue MasterCard, Express Credit Gold MasterCard, Petron-BPI MasterCard and BPI Edge/Mini Edge in purchasing items at real 0% interest are assured of absolutely no hidden charges installment deals! Because unlike other credit card purchases wherein you pay just the minimum amount due or 5% of the outstanding balance every month, chances are your 0% installment purchases actually get interest. That's why the BPI 0% interest is for real!

Plus! Cardholders who make purchases in the BPI Installment Madness promo are also entitled to join BPI Express Credit Card's existing promos: the 2mad about' emall and the Make It Happen promo.

The 2mad about' emall promo gives BPI Express Credit cardholders the chance to win a Nissan Patrol 4x4. All they have to do is make a minimum P1,000 single receipt regular purchase or a P3,000 single receipt S.I.P. purchase at Glorietta.

BPI Express Credit's Make It Happen promo, meanwhile, gives cardholders the chance to win a trip to a trip to the United State's popular theme parks, a Mediterranean Cruise, a 2006 Porsche Boxster and a 2006 Audi A4 Avant. All they have to do is make a minimum P1,000 single receipt regular purchase or a P3,000 single receipt S.I.P. purchase at any BPI accredited merchant nationwide.

Not a BPI Express Credit Cardholder yet? Sign up now and get the chance to be part of the shopping frenzy of the BPI Installment Madness. That and numerous exclusive features and privileges like superior security against fraud with the Europay MasterCard/VISA-compliant chip, lower finance charges, low foreign currency conversion rates for purchases made abroad, no hidden charges, and payment convenience anytime anywhere via the Express Phone, Express Online, and in over 1,200 ATMs and 700 BPI or BPI Family Bank branches nationwide.

So make sure you make the most of your money. Take advantage of the BPI Real 0%, No Sweat Installment Madness.

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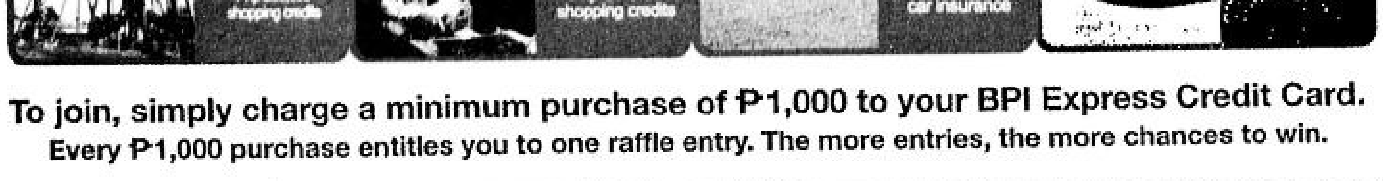
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JOB OPENING
HELP WANTED
APPLY INSIDE
GRADS WELCOME

Job-hunting 101

By Katrina Yap
2bU! Correspondent

There are thousands of new graduates just like you who are looking for employment, so you have to work at it

CONGRATULATIONS, FRESH GRAD! AFTER years of sleepless nights and countless projects, you're now ready to face the world. Armed with a college degree, you feel invincible. You want to get your professional life started, and you want it now.

But landing a job nowadays seems tougher than you originally thought. Some of your batchmates might have already found themselves employed, adding to the pressure on you.

But remember that your career is your own, so take your own time in finding what suits you best. Here are some tips on how you can start that career.

Evaluate yourself.

Before you even start writing a resumé, you'll have to conduct a self-assessment. Ask yourself what interests you, what excites you.

Try to define your passion, so you'll have an idea what possible careers would suit you. Do a rundown of your skills and abilities.

Be honest to yourself—this is the only way you'll have a grasp of what you can and want to do.

Research

Next, do your research. Look up industries and employers you may take an interest in.

Keep an open mind—dream big, but don't be too picky. Say you graduated with a degree in Mass Communication, but have difficulty finding job openings in mass media. You might want to consider exploring careers in advertising and public relations.

Most companies also now have Corporate Communication and Media departments, where a lot of opportunities await those with strong writing skills. Always look beyond.

Note: Health care, information technology and the call-center industries are known to be most active in recruiting today.

Finding jobs

So where can you find jobs?

You'll come across some when you do your research on different companies and industries. But that might not be enough. What's important is that you stop sitting around thinking a job will miraculously find you. There are thousands of new graduates just like you who are looking for employment, so you have to work at it.

Places to look:

- Classified ads section of newspapers
- Your school's placement office
- Job fairs
- Your local government unit
- The worldwide web (try online recruitment websites like www.jobmarketonline.com, www.jobsdb.com and www.jobstreet.com.ph)
- Your prospective companies' websites
- Direct application

Also, ask for referrals. Some companies offer incentives to their employees when they bring in qualified people. This, however, has disadvantages: Aside from putting pressure on the person who recommended you (it will be his/her head on the chopping board if you don't meet expectations), you'll always be held to a certain standard for having been recommended.

Writing the resumé

When it comes to drafting your resumé, keep in mind that a winning resumé is your key to an interview. So go ahead, highlight your abilities, your education and work experience (if any).

But don't even think of lying. You'll get into a lot of trouble for giving misleading information. Your potential employers can do reference checks.

Write the objective specific to the position you're applying for. Do not write just one resumé for different positions and companies. Each resumé (and cover letter—we will get to that later), must be tailor-fit to a specific employer.

Some pointers

Do:

Proofread. Check for typos and grammatical errors. Go through every detail.

Keep it short and simple. Some employers would prefer that resumé be just a page long, as they scan through hundreds of other applications.

JOB-HUNTING/ D4

Resumé vs curriculum vitae

A resumé is a one- or two-page summary of your skills, experience and education. Resumés must be concise. The person reading the resumé is likely to spend just a few minutes reviewing it.

A curriculum vitae or CV is more detailed and structured. It outlines your educational background, publications, awards and work history.

CVs tend to be on the lengthy side (they can run over 10 pages long), so it works best for those who could boast of extensive academic and professional credentials. It is used primarily when applying for international, education, scientific or research positions.

Resumés work best for first-time job hunters.

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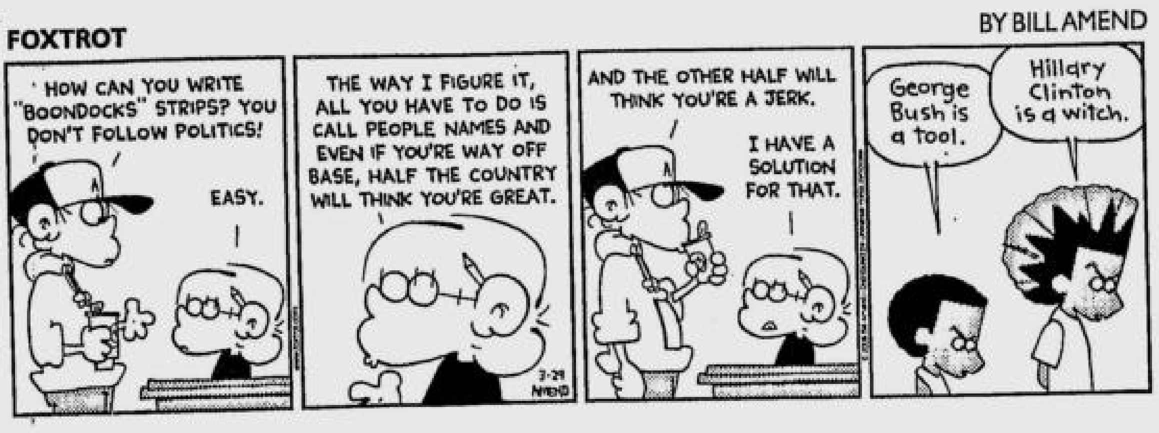
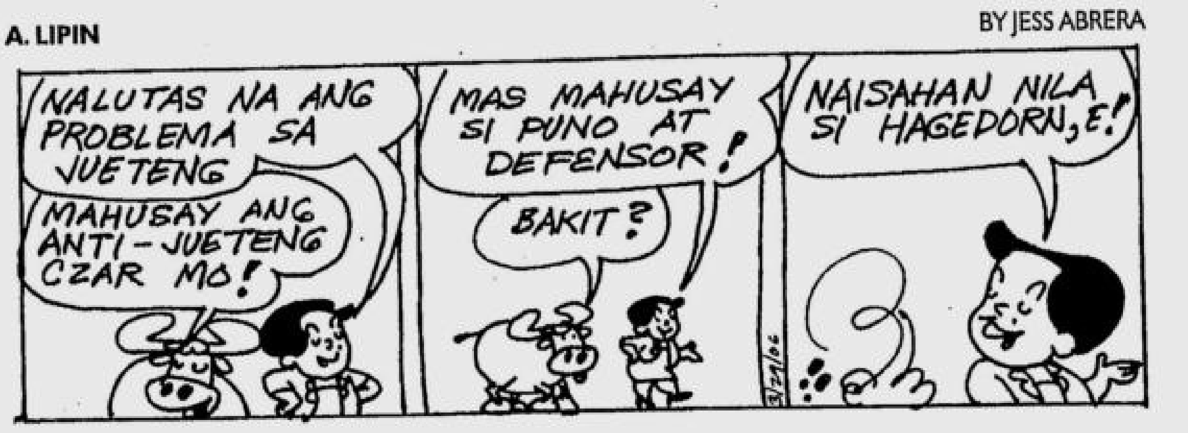
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


HOW CAN YOU WRITE "BOONDOCKS" STRIPS? YOU DON'T FOLLOW POLITICS!
EASY.
THE WAY I FIGURE IT, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS CALL PEOPLE NAMES AND EVEN IF YOU'RE WAY OFF BASE, HALF THE COUNTRY WILL THINK YOU'RE GREAT.
3-29 AMEND
AND THE OTHER HALF WILL THINK YOU'RE A JERK.
I HAVE A SOLUTION FOR THAT.
George Bush is a tool.
Hillary Clinton is a witch.

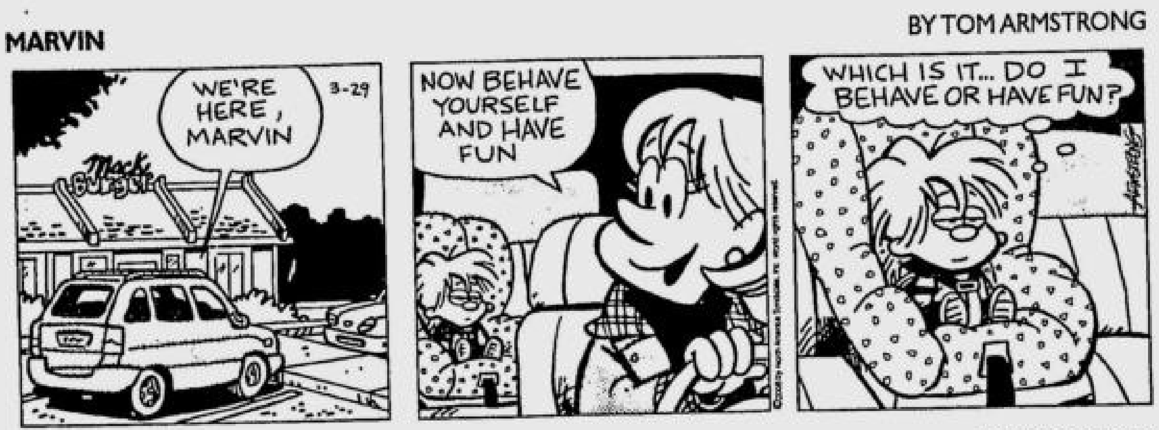
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NALUTAS NA ANG PROBLEMA SA JUETENG
MAHUSAY ANG ANTI-JUETENG CZAR MO!
MAS MAHUSAY SI PUNO AT DEFENSOR!
BAKIT?
3/29/06
NAISAHAN NILA SI HAGEDORN, E!

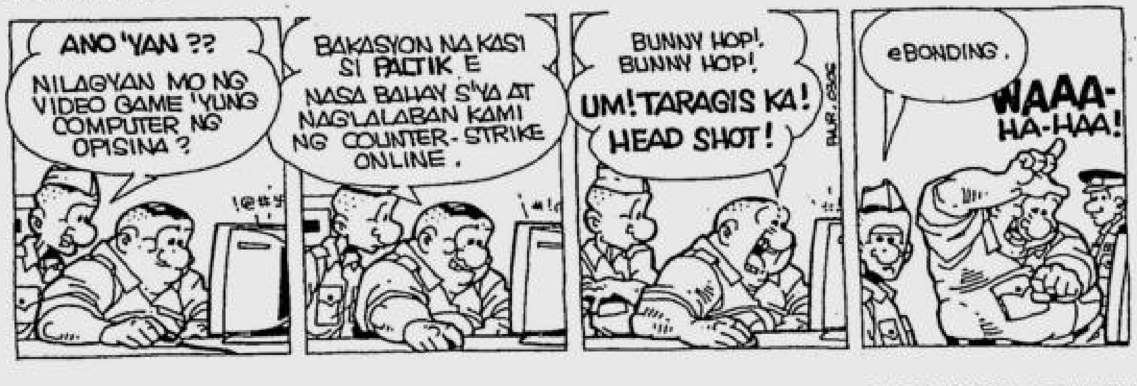
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WE'RE HERE, MARVIN
3-29
Mack Burger
NOW BEHAVE YOURSELF AND HAVE FUN
WHICH IS IT... DO I BEHAVE OR HAVE FUN?
ARMSTRONG

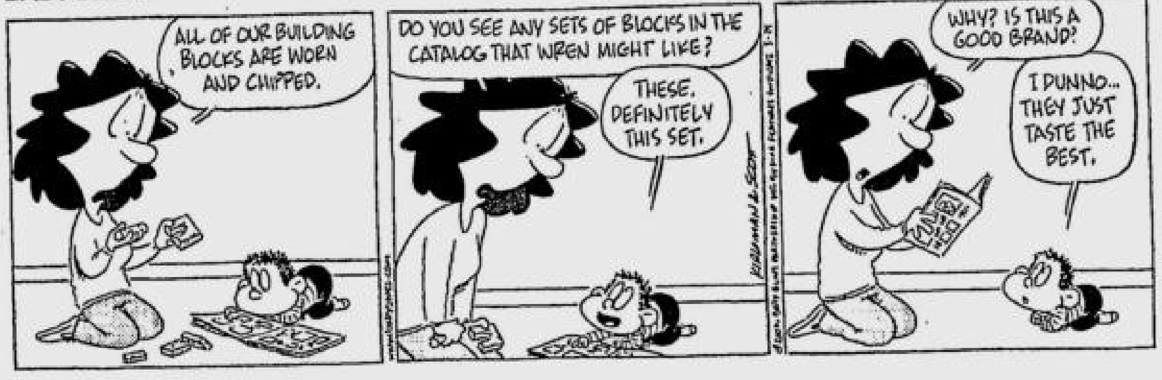
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANO 'YAN ??
NILAGYAN MO NG VIDEO GAME 'YUNG COMPUTER NG OPISINA ?
BAKASYON NA KASI SI PALTIK E NASA BAHAY S'YA AT NAGLALABAN KAMI NG COUNTER-STRIKE ONLINE.
BUNNY HOP! BUNNY HOP!
UM! TARAGIS KA! HEAD SHOT!
eBONDING.
WAAA-HA-HAA!

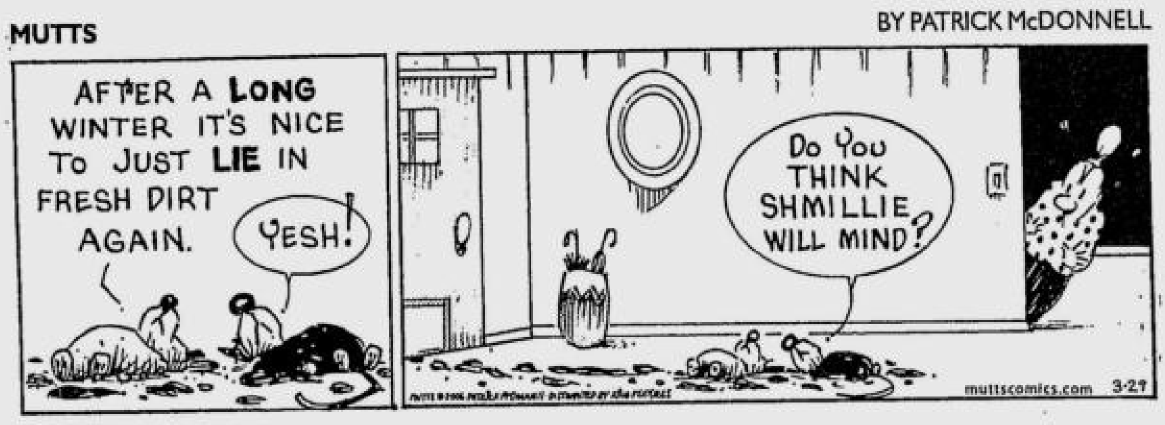
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ALL OF OUR BUILDING BLOCKS ARE WORN AND CHIPPED.
DO YOU SEE ANY SETS OF BLOCKS IN THE CATALOG THAT WREN MIGHT LIKE?
THESE. DEFINITELY THIS SET.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT
WHY? IS THIS A GOOD BRAND?
I DUNNO... THEY JUST TASTE THE BEST.

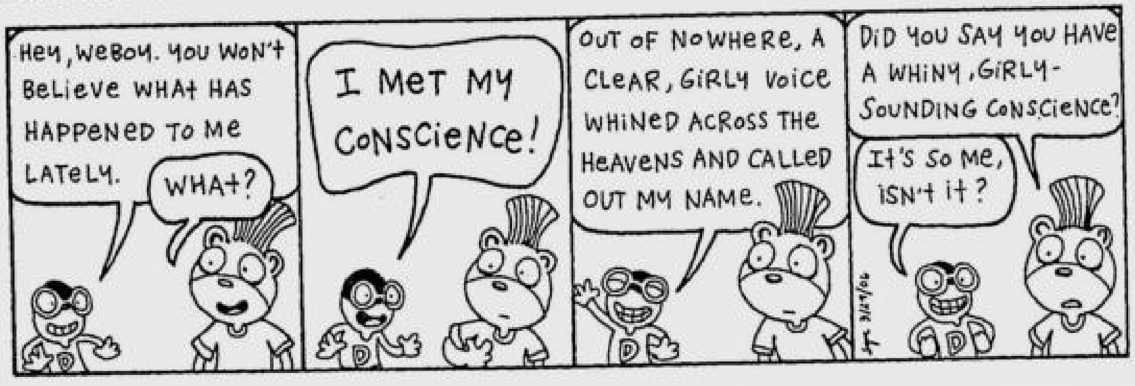
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


AFTER A LONG WINTER IT'S NICE TO JUST LIE IN FRESH DIRT AGAIN.
YESH!
DO YOU THINK SHMILLIE WILL MIND?
muttscomics.com 3-29

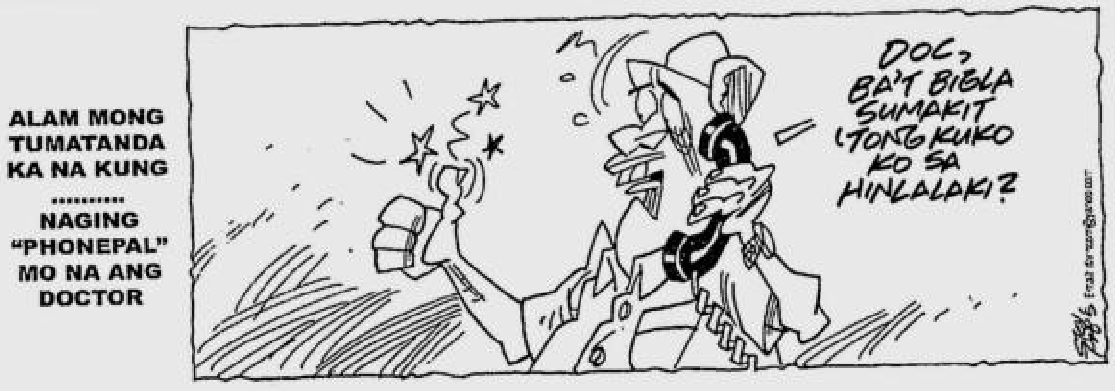
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, Weboy. You won't believe what has happened to me lately.
What?
I met my conscience!
Out of nowhere, a clear, girly voice whined across the heavens and called out my name.
Did you say you have a whiny, girly-sounding conscience?
It's so me, isn't it?

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ALAM MONG TUMATANDA KA NA KUNG
....
NAGING "PHONEPAL" MO NA ANG DOCTOR
DOC, BA'T BIGLA SUMAKIT 'TONG KUKO KO SA HINLALAKI?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're extremely idealistic. You're also trustworthy and loyal. But others have to earn your respect. You have a keen humor and appreciate life's ironies. However, you value your own privacy. It's important that you work hard in the year ahead, because whatever you build or construct will benefit you in the following year. **Birthdate of:** Jennifer Capriati, tennis player; Hideaki Takizawa, actor; Lucy Lawless, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Today is the only New Moon in your sign all year. This is a perfect time to make some new resolutions about how you want to improve your life.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): It's important to have quiet time to cultivate your inner world. Each and every one of us has an interior world and an exterior world. They need to be balanced.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today's New Moon offers you an opportunity to think about how you can improve your friendships and your style of relating to groups and organizations.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): We all react to authority figures in different ways (perhaps similarly to how we reacted to our parents). Nevertheless, we all have to learn how to deal with authority.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): It's time for you to think about how you can travel, get your education, study something new and grasp more out of life. Now is your opportunity to ponder this.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): It's never easy understanding the values of others when they disagree with our own. Today's New Moon offers you a chance to get a better footing here.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Today's New Moon opposes you. This is the best time all year for you to cultivate a better understanding of how to deal with partners and those who are closest to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): How can you improve your health and your daily activities, especially at work, if you're employed? Think about what you can do to make your life run more efficiently.

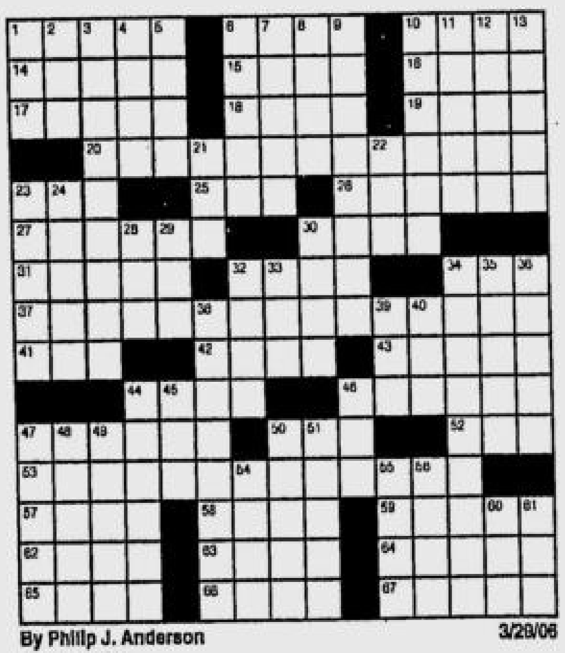
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): We are all creative in different ways. In more primitive societies, this is easily acknowledged. What can you do to tap into your creativity?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Today's New Moon offers you a chance to make improvements to where you live and to family relationships. What can help you accomplish this?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It's important to look around you and see just how much love there is in your daily world. It's there. You just have to have an open heart to see it.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might want to think about how you spend money and how you earn it today. What improvements do you want to make to your finances?

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
3/29/06

ACROSS
1 Rabbit fur
6 Actor Lugosi
10 Coarse file
14 Tropical palm
15 Jack of oaters
16 Director Kazan
17 Concealed microphones
18 Lose traction
19 Sly look
20 Not the real deal on the PGA
23 Stan or Spike
25 Manipulate
26 Vaquero's lassos
27 Star in Aquila
30 Find a perch
31 Decants
32 Smelting residue
34 Mid-sixth century date
37 Not the real deal in the WBA
41 Snakelike swimmer
42 Nair competitor
43 Poet Doolittle
44 Operate with a beam
46 Call it quits
47 Dope fiend
50 Comic Delaria
52 Wow!
53 Not the real deal in the NFL
57 Yeats or Keats
58 Notorious fiddler
59 Literary category
62 Pre-Euro currency
63 Jung or Sagan
64 Competed at Daytona
65 First place?
66 Zeno's home
67 Banned big bang

DOWN
1 Hard and fast rule
2 "Exodus" hero
3 Everlasting
4 Cake finisher
5 JPL partner
6 Outdoes
7 "Dallas" matriarch
8 Secular
9 Strength of a current
10 Put in more film
11 Attu resident
12 Tuscany city
13 Pals on the ranch
21 Junkyard dog
22 Stimpy's pal
23 Concentration gap
24 Marry on the run
28 ETA word
29 Leb. neighbor
30 Endure
32 Old dagger
33 T-shirt size
34 Persistence
35 Hunter's cabin
36 Nonsensical
38 Single example
39 Andress film
40 Fam. member
44 Lend an ear
45 Top card
46 Tatter
47 Tell's target
48 Automaton, for short
49 Tractor pioneer
50 Peter of "Casablanca"
51 First name in B-29 lore
54 Close securely
55 Taj Mahal locale
56 Main dish
60 Legal thing
61 NYC clock setting

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	T	U	N	G		H	U	N	T		P	S	S	T
E	R	N	I	E		A	S	E	A		A	L	O	E
T	U	M	B	L	E	W	E	E	D		R	I	L	E
I	C	E		A	G	A	R		P	R	I	D	E	S
N	E	T		T	A	I		D	O	U	S	E		
			R	I	D	I	C	U	L	E		R	E	D
J	A	S	O	N			A	P	E	R	T	U	R	E
O	S	L	O		T	A	M	E	S		I	L	I	E
S	P	I	T	F	I	R	E			P	E	E	N	S
E	S	P		A	C	C	O	R	D	E	D			
		C	O	N	K	S		E	A	R		D	E	N
B	R	O	W	S	E		R	A	S	H		E	V	E
R	O	V	E		T	R	I	P	H	A	M	M	E	R
A	M	E	N		E	A	S	E		P	O	U	N	D
T	A	R	S		R	E	E	D		S	O	R	T	S

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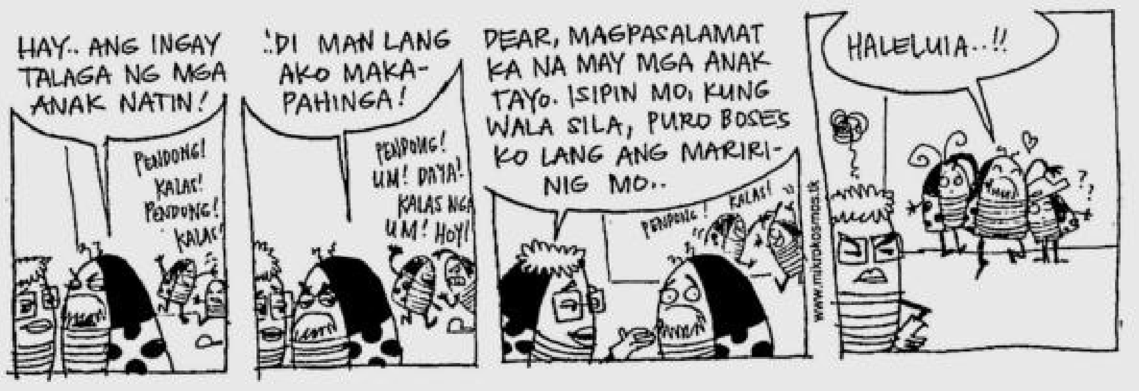
3/28/06

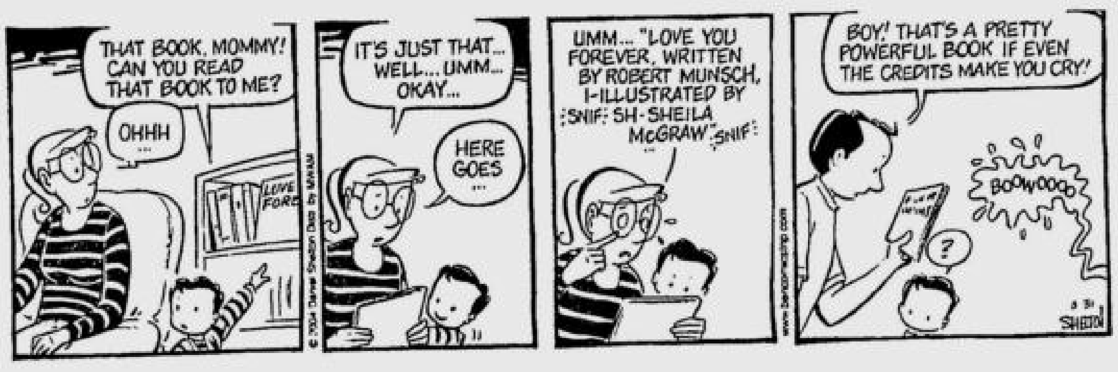
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


HAY.. ANG INGAY TALAGA NG MGA ANAK NATIN!
PENDONG! KALAS! PENDONG! KALAS!
'DI MAN LANG AKO MAKA-PAHINGA!
PENDONG! UM! DAYA! KALAS NGA UM! HOY!
DEAR, MAGPASALAMAT KA NA MAY MGA ANAK TAYO. ISIPIN MO, KUNG WALA SILA, PURO BOSES KO LANG ANG MARIRINIG MO..
PENDONG! KALAS!
www.mikrokosmos.tk
HALELUIA..!!

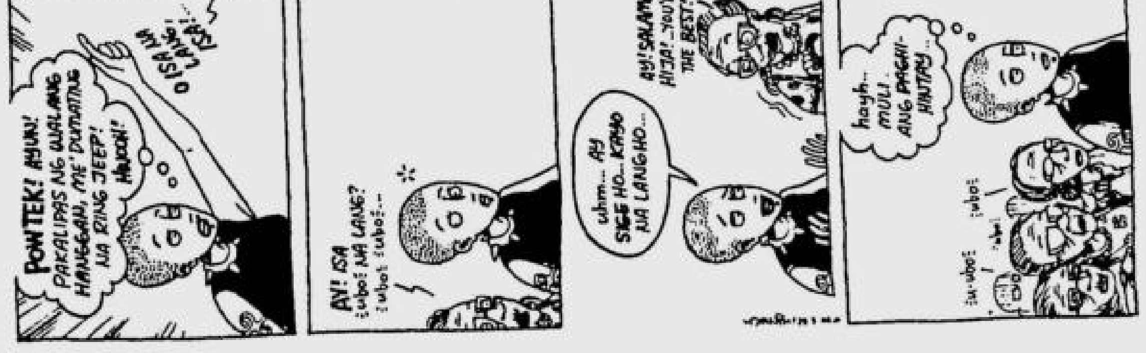
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


THAT BOOK, MOMMY! CAN YOU READ THAT BOOK TO ME?
OHHH ...
LOVE FOREVER
IT'S JUST THAT... WELL... UMM... OKAY...
HERE GOES ...
UMM... "LOVE YOU FOREVER, WRITTEN BY ROBERT MUNSCH, I-ILLUSTRATED BY :SNIF: SH-SHEILA McGRAW" :SNIF:
BOY! THAT'S A PRETTY POWERFUL BOOK IF EVEN THE CREDITS MAKE YOU CRY!
BOOWOOOO
?
SHELTON

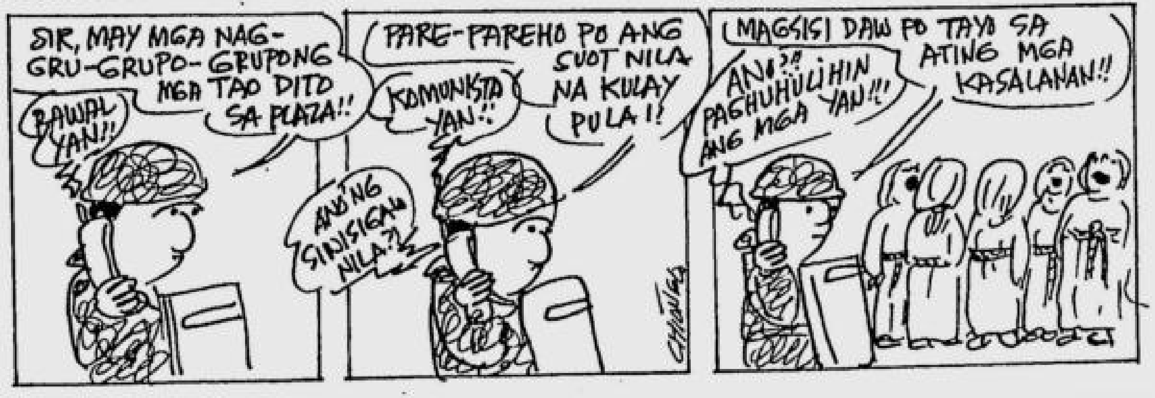
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


POWTEK! AHUN! PAKALIPAS NG WALANG HANGGAN, ME' DUMATING NA RING JEEP! HAAAY!
O ISA NA LANG! ISA!
AY! ISA NA LANG?
¡ubo! ¡ubo!
uhm... AY SIGE HO... KAYO NA LANG HO...
AY! SALAMAT HIJA! ...YOU'RE THE BEST!...
hayh... MULI... ANG PAGHI-HINTAY...
¡ubo!
¡ubo!
¡u-ubo!

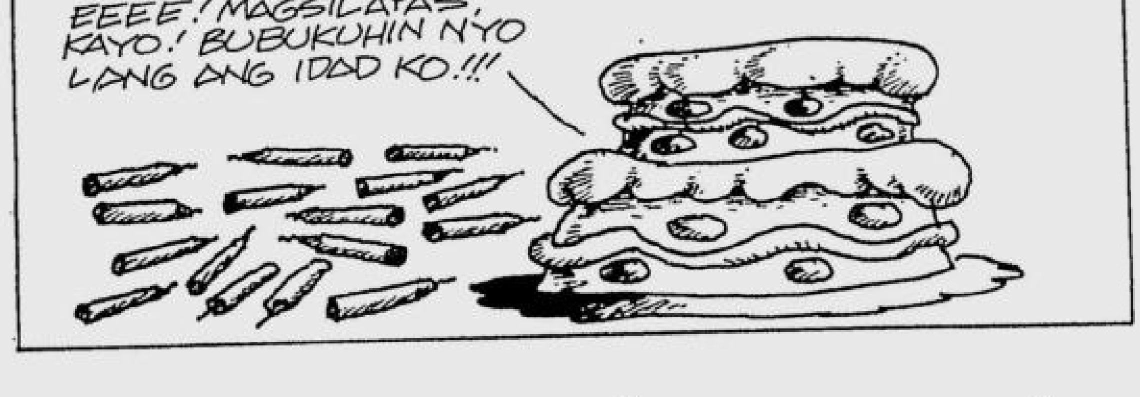
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

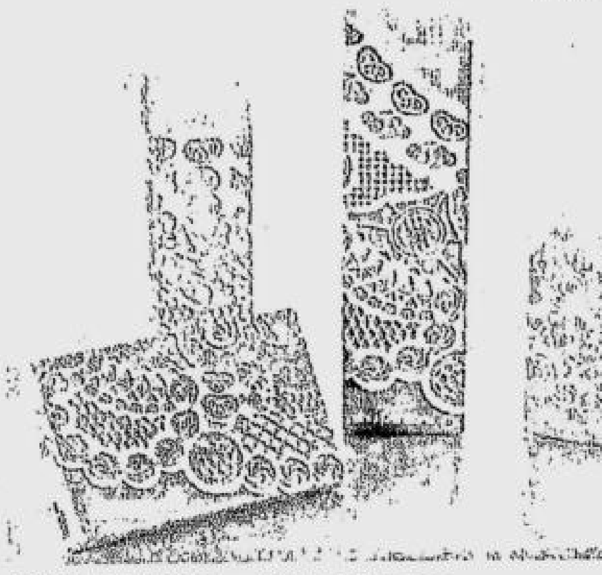

SIR, MAY MGA NAG-GRU-GRUPO-GRUPONG MGA TAO DITO SA PLAZA!!
BAWAL YAN!!
PARE-PAREHO PO ANG SUOT NILA NA KULAY PULA!!
KOMUNISTA YAN!!
ANO'NG SINISIGAW NILA?!
MAGSISI DAW PO TAYO SA ATING MGA KASALANAN!!
ANO?!! PAGHUHULIHIN ANG MGA YAN!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


EEEE! MAGSILAYAS KAYO! BUBUKUHIN N'YO LANG ANG IDAD KO!!!

GIVE your hair a healthy finish with Kerastase Chroma Perfect.



SHU UEMURA'S Sweet Mode Collection

ENHANCE that shine. Professionel Lumi-oil

PHOTO BY SARA BLACK
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JIGS MAYUGA OF SHU UEMURA
SPECIAL THANKS TO TINA TINIO OF SHU UEMURA

MY PERFECT summer face

How to look sexy this summer

Vanity Fare

Lora Gabol

DESPITE THE SCORCHING SUN, I'M completely loving the fact that summer's here. It's the time of year my heels take a rest and my flip-flops take a beating, and also the only two months of the year I try to simplify my beauty regimen.

This doesn't mean I'll settle for looking like something the tide brought in. Summer is, after all, considered the sexiest season. I have secret weapons that will follow me through each I'll be taking—I suggest you stock up on them, too.

Clear summer skin. The hot sun + concealer = disaster. This is why I intend to keep my skin pimple-free in the coming months, hormonal changes be damned.

Since I started taking Murad Clear Skin Supplement, I've been crossing my fingers less and rejoicing in front of the mirror more. This super skin vitamin cocktail has anti-inflammation and anti-toxin properties that help protect, purify and heal skin, resulting in a clear complexion from within.

Vanity fair. This year, I'm making a beauty resolution that may just change my life: I have chosen not to go against nature and keep my skin in the color I was born in. Last year's horrific sunburn has left me quite traumatized, so while I will keep enjoying the rays at the beach, I will make sure that I've slapped on just enough of the genius Nivea Whitening Sunblock Range on my face and body.

The mane event. Summer is the time to get naturally sun-kissed locks, without having to actually bake under. Run to your salon and ask for strategically positioned highlights, then make sure you finish with a Kerastase Chroma Perfect treatment for a shiny, healthy finish. For beach-babe hair even in the city, keep a bottle of L'oreal Professionel Lumi-Oil, a shine enhancer and de-frizzer for all hair types (just consult with your stylist to know the formulation for you).

Sweet summer color. Just as fruit shakes and ice cream are staples in the hottest time of year, my choice of makeup palette is leaning toward sweet sorbet hues. Just in time is Shu Uemura Sweet Mode Collection, the prettiest, girliest Spring-Summer offering from the brand to date. For my perfect summer face (upper right photo), makeup expert Jigs Mayuga brightened up my peepers with the too-cool (and I mean that literally) Eye Jelly in White, and defined them more with a few pats of Eye Jelly in Brown. This is best applied, quite conveniently, with fingers, and is definitely a must-tote in every summer kit.

For a bit of edge, Jigs lined my eyes with the Eye Light Pencil (he used yellow on my top lashlines and blue on the lower ones). The effect made my eyes truly pop out without seeming over the top.

A touch of Glow On blush in Apricot on my cheeks and a little of iridescent Sugar to highlight gave me a covetable glow, while my lips were kissed with Sweet Lip Gloss in Daisy (which I wear every day), a yummy candy pink.

Shu Uemura is available at Rustan's Makati and Rustan's Tower, Shangri-La Plaza; Murad at Essenses Rustan's Makati, Rustan's Tower, Gateway Mall; Nivea at all leading department stores; Kerastase and L'Oreal Professionel at leading salons.

E-mail the author at lora_gahol@yahoo.com

Prizes for graduates

VASELINE MAKES THE SEASON more special by honoring this year's graduating batch and the mothers who stood behind them all the way with the "Glowing Inside" promo.

Vaseline Shampoo understands that a loving mom always makes sure their kids are always at their best for school. From taking care of their hair to double-checking their assignments and projects, a mother will always support her children with pride.

As part of Vaseline's Glowing Inside Tribute, many exciting prizes are in store for moms and children to make learning a fun and rewarding activity, apart from giving the family healthy, glowing hair.

More than a million-pesos worth of cash prizes, computer showcases, and Nokia mobile phones are up for grabs! To get the chance to win instantly, carefully peel off the shampoo bottle label or sachet of any Vaseline variant, and look for the "Glowing Inside" logo to win. Take part in the Vaseline promo and celebrate this milestone moment with your mom!

Winners can verify their prize by calling the toll-free Vaseline Glowing Inside Hotline 1800-10-5643333 (outside Metro Manila) or 5643333 (within Metro Manila); or going to the nearest LBC branch. Promo ends May 15.

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Per DTI-NCR permit no.1587, series of 2006.

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5X digital zoom
1.6" LCD
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C360
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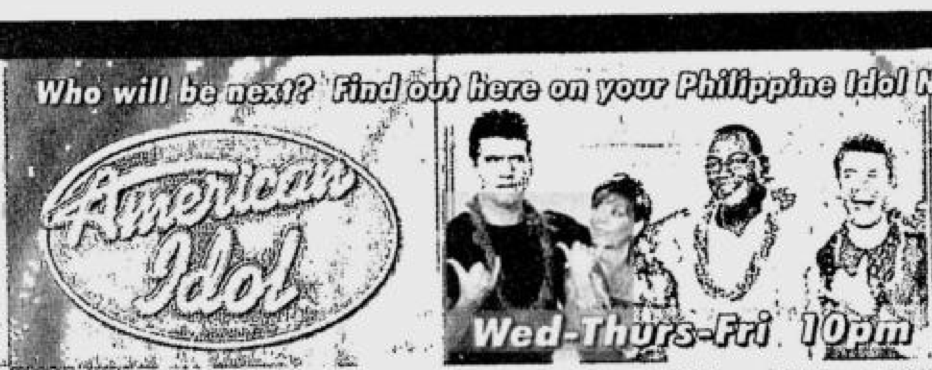
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Wednesday, March 29, 2006



Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network

American Idol

Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm

ABC Iba Tayo!

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)		PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol			
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Princess Lulu	Pinoy Big Brother		S.O.C.O.			Insider
AXN		The Mentalist		Next Action Star		The Amazing Race (Season IX)		Cold Squad		Amazon		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	The Amazing Race (Season IX)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		CSI: Miami (Season II)	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Tom & Jerry Show		Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel		Powerpuff Girls		Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One		Kambal Tuko				Ipaglaban Mo				Bulaklak Ng Maynila			Persona	Dekada '70 (9:15 PM)				Wala Na Bang Pag-ibig	
Cinemax	Dave			The World Of Suzie Wong					A Twist Of The Knife			Chips '99			Philadelphia (9:40 PM)				First Target (11:45PM)
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Crime/Suspense		The Closer		Law & Order Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	I, Detective	Law & Order		Law & Order Special Victims Unit		Training Season				Bones	
Discovery Channel		Zero Hour		American Chopper		The History Of Singapore		The Secrets of Megalightning		Wild Discovery		Hour China		Best Of American Chopper Jr. Vs. Sr.		A Haunting		Great Quakes	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/[illegible]	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon	Buzz on Maggie	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '05 Men's World Summit of Pool		Pool/ Snooker Mosconi Cup 2003		X-Games Files '04	X-Games Files '04	Motorsport Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's Int'l Challenge of Champs		Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's Int'l Challenge of Champs		Motorsport Asia	Major League Baseball Division Series				
ETC		Average Joe		Change of Heart	Eliminidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars		Beauty & The Geek		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Marriage Works in Christ	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Adventures In Odyssey	EWTN Original Productions	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Defending Life	EWTN Gallery	In The Heart Of The Church	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Catholic Social Teaching	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Carpenter's Shop	Our Father's Plan	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	La Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Family Law III		Mystery Woman: Sing Me A Murder			Ladies Man	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy		The Trail To Hope Rose			Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II (10:35PM)		Strong Medicine (11:25PM)
HBO		Urban Cowboy (3:15 PM)					Pink Cadillac				Mean Girls			The Calcium Kid			Thunderbirds		
Hero TV	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Beyblade	Crush Gear Turbo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Heat		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Glick	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Life & Style		Fine Living Special		Intimate Portrait	
MTV Philippines	Jams	MTV Hits	MTV Hits		The 70's House	Pop Inc		2003 MAA Romance Special	MTV Hits			Homecoming	Get Spotted	TRL		Seasons: Orange & Lemons	Laguna Beach	Get Hitch'd	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXLOG		Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXLOG
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Hunter Hunted		Interpol Investigates		Science Times		Top 6		Wow!		About Asia		Tsunami Watch/ Nat Geographic Specials "Animal Omens"		Hunter Hunted: Kodiak Killer/ Stalked By Sharks		Interpol Investigates	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports [illegible]	[illegible]	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition				Bayan OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			[illegible]				[illegible]				Estudyante Blues				Waway				Wicker Park (Dubbed in Tagalog)
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zenki	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Irene	Mars	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		Irene	Romance
RPN 9	TV Shopping					Global Window		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Iron Chef		Three Wishes		Extreme Make-Over		Newswatch Now	Just For Laughs	Money Talk	Kerygma
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		SBN Music Video		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports		WTA Indian Wells '06 Day 3				Danish Open 2006			NBA Jam	Sagupaan	Boxing Barrera vs Chavez	Sportsdesk					Sportsdesk	IBF '06 China Masters Finals	
Sports Plus				Arena Football League		Ultimate Fighting Championship				NBA Game Spurs Vs Clippers					NBA Game Atlanta Vs Charlotte				
Star Movies				One Fine Day (4:15 PM)				Braveheart (6:05 PM)						Phantom Below			The One (10:35PM)		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Angel		American Idol		Star News Asia	Seinfeld	American Idol		Medical Investigation/ [illegible]		Smallville		Seinfeld	American Idol
Studio 23	Bewitched	Masked Rider Ryuki		Duel Masters		Batman Beyond	Xiaolin Showdown	Spirits	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race Family Edition		CSI (8:20 PM)	Life As We Know It (9:10PM)		News Central	Oprah		The Men's Room

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

'Provinciana' hits it big in the city, somehow

By Anne A. Jambora

WELCOME TO THE REAL world.

As you toss aside your toga today, still warm from use during the commencement exercises, your head reels feverishly with youthful ideals of the new life you're about to embark in. Well, toss them out as well. It's time to grow up.

While there's nothing wrong with dreaming, and I urge you all to dream big dreams, becoming a full-fledged adult is far from easy. Alas, life is not a box of chocolates.

There are sharks out there. You will fall flat on your face, you will get frustrated, you will feel the sting of rejection, and you will take the thorny course just to reclaim your life. Take heart, though. The lessons you will glean will reward you better than the riches of this world.

As you prepare to take your wings for its first awkward flight, explore the many possibilities and choices. Life is tempered by the tough choices you make. And there's the good news—you always, always have a choice. Be wary of those who say you don't. Their imaginations are thin.

You're young. Inexperience may be your worst enemy for now, but take advantage of the luxury of time afforded by your youth to pursue your passions and, in case you still don't know it yet, to find your calling. Strangely enough, sometimes it is only when you lose your way that you find yourself.

After my graduation, for instance, I vowed never to become a journalist—a newspaper journalist, to be exact. And I did everything I could to avoid that route. I edited and produced TV documentaries, I wrote scripts and created storyboards, I wrote copy when I stumbled into advertising… What began as a transition job here at the INQUIRER turned out to be the home I've long searched for.

Conundrum

It is an existential conundrum, this thing called life, so try not to waste too much time asking questions that nobody—dead or alive—will ever have an answer to. Just go ahead and get a life.

Don't be afraid to take risks, for the day you stop taking chances is the day you begin to die. Step out from your comfort zone. Cut the umbilical cord that has held you affectionately since infancy. While that link has cloistered you from the dog-eat-dog world outside, it is only when you scrape your knee and begin to bleed that you become human. Do yourself a favor and give your parents a break. Learn how it feels to be truly free and alive.

Independence, naturally, comes with a price. And the long queue of bills to settle every month is just the tip of the iceberg.

When I decided to seek work in far-off Manila, less than a year after my father passed away, I bought a one-way ticket and that was it. Turning back with my tail between my legs was not an option. My mother offered a plane ticket to Manila. Too proud, or stupid, I refused to accept it. Instead I bought boat tickets to save a few bucks (my beloved parrot traveled with me). She offered to give me allowance to help me get by on my first few months, and again I said no.

"Don't worry, I'll be fine."

Truth was I barely had over P1,000 in my pocket—and this wasn't a very long time ago—and that terrified me more than my horrible grasp of the Tagalog language. Having been freeloading in my mother's womb all those years and spoiled rotten of having everything done for me, I was too dumb to think of saving up. Ah, but it was too late for regrets.

Sure, it was tough braving my way through thick crowds in a strange city armed only with my faltering Tagalog. In fact, there were times when I asked friends to write down on a piece of paper a Tagalog sentence when I had to buy, in a neighborhood *sari-sari* store, something as mundane as needle and thread.

But that was nothing compared to the doors slammed at my face simply because most Manilans hadn't a notion of my university. (It is, in fact, among the Top 5 universities, but since it's not in Metro Manila, it didn't bear any merit.) How snooty and presumptuous this city can be! How quickly it scoffs at the sight of some lost *probinsyana* who deserves an equal chance to follow her dreams. But then again, this isn't a perfect world.

Inevitably, I ran low on chips. I staved off hunger by tucking myself in bed early even when I'd get a headache, unable to sleep. When I washed my clothes for the first time in my life with my bare hands, my spirit sank. My hopes melted with the suds and snaked their way to the gutter. And I broke a promise I made to myself: I wept. Unabashedly. I yearned for the comforts of my home.

A diamond stone is lifeless unless it is cut in precision many times. And then it sparkles, and then it shines. I do not have a million bucks or glittering medals to my name, nor do I now live in a posh address. But I am content to glow in my family's eyes.

Follow your heart, guard your principles, be true to yourself. Life is too short to live up to the expectations of others. Before you know it, your time is up, metered by your shallow sighs.

The world is waiting. Are you ready for it?

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

To the graduates, to make much of time

By Constantino C. Tejero

IT IS NOW AT THAT TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN the fiercest rat race occurs. Because it is around this time that hundreds of schools are unleashing thousands of graduates all over the country.

The moment you graduate from college, you naturally look for a job—or what's a diploma for? One has to satisfy the material needs before one even thinks of making a mark in society. It's basic instinct—or how else could one physically go on to achieve that higher aspiration? To build the temple, you have to feed the body.

But with a few hundreds of jobs dangling before thousands of job-seekers—millions even, if we include the unemployed—frustration is rampant, the jostling becomes rabid, a stampede is understandable. The term "rat race," in fact, is insufficient when you're talking of a dog-eat-dog situation.

New graduates actually have two options: Either prepare to get bruised and join the rat race at once, or take it easy and recharge energies, gather momentum, and plunge.

You think schoolwork was bruising? Well, there's bad news waiting for you here: Schoolwork is a balm compared to onsite job. In fact, the situation of the new graduate can favorably compare with that classic case of one being thrown from the frying pan to the fire.

And if you get that job, don't expect to be on top of the corporate ladder immediately, unless your uncle owns the majority share in the company. Everyone has to start somewhere.

And value that job as if it were the only one you'd get in your lifetime. Remember, at every step you make on that ladder, dozens of hands and feet are grasping at or stepping on your shoes—and eyes are watching for your misstep, waiting for your fall.

Actually, the satisfaction from a job well done, whether in school or at the workplace, is just about the same. But there's the bonus of having your own money to spend as you please, and the freedom from dependence on your relatives.

The wiser person would opt for the second option, if he or she can afford it. Graduates are like soldiers from battle who need to be treated of their wounds, bandaged, fed and rested before being sent back to the battlefield.

If Daddy can still afford it, you can always take up further studies in preparation for that job and get your MBA. Better still, read the books you cast aside in your student days, and cultivate a wider appreciation of the immaterial, a deeper understanding of life's mysteries and calm acceptance of its absurdities.

But while recharging your batteries, don't short-circuit. You might forget why you strove to get that diploma in the first place. While resting, don't waste time. You might enjoy the well-rested life so much you can get rusty and so forever rest. There's nothing more tragic than youth having a burnout.

If, like the Buddhist, your concept of time is circular instead of linear, and you're not cut out for a nine-to-five job, well, you can always go to the mountains, into caves and hinterlands, and join NGOs that work for the betterment of our cultural minorities. Or be an artist, or become a philosopher. Anything but lie fallow.

We know life is hard, so don't make it any harder. If you can't be useful to society, help yourself, at least.

Lessons from a not-so-ideal graduate

By Pam Pastor

I AM THE LAST PERSON WHO SHOULD be talking about graduation. I didn't even attend my own.

I saw graduation as a hurdle to get over, an obstacle I had to overcome so I could finally start working full-time for this paper. When that fateful day came, I wore a toga all right, but only to my dinner party. And it was the wrong shade of blue—the shop at Recto had run out of my college's colors.

Despite my absence from the ceremonies, graduating from the university taught me a few things—some big, some small and some, well, forgettable.

You will miss school. Sure, you're still in the middle of rejoicing over the fact that you no longer have to face your nasty professor and you're probably thanking the high heavens because the days of surprise quizzes are over. But when you're neck-deep in paperwork and are collecting overtime hours as if you can sell them on eBay for a fortune, you will definitely start missing those days when your biggest problem was today's graded recitation. You know those annoying adults who tell you things like, "Oh I wish I could go back to school" or "I'd rather be a student forever"? Pretty soon, that will become you.

Take a break. You have your entire life to work. And once you start working, you'll be doing it forever. Or at least until you're 65. You've just spent at least sixteen years of your life in school. Now is the time to take a break. Whether your idea of a timeout is a weekend in Boracay, a month at your grandparents' place in the province or a full week in your pajamas eating Cheetos and watching DVDs, do it. You deserve it.

Don't let your course dictate your life. Your parents won the first battle—you hate math but they made you study accountancy. You don't know how you ended taking up dentistry when you can't imagine staring into people's mouths for the rest of your life. Here's a little nugget of wisdom: Your course doesn't dictate who or what you will become. A friend who took up geodetic engineering is now making a good living in publishing. I know a biology graduate who is now running her own business, a nurse who became a priest, a lawyer who decided to open a restaurant. You future is waiting—and you get to decide what it will be.

The school you graduated from does not determine the quality of your future. There are still small-minded companies that only accept applicants from the supposed top universities but don't let that stop you. Just because you came from one of the more popular schools doesn't mean you can rest easy. And it doesn't matter either if you came from a school that no one else has heard about. It is you, and not your diploma, who will make your future.

Pursue your passion. Life is too short for you to be stuck doing things you really don't want to be doing. Sure, blessed and few are the people who get to do what they love for a living but you might just turn out to be one of them. You would never know if you don't try. Whether it's art, music, sports, writing, food—pursue your passion. Your happiness and success may just depend on it.

Don't let your college persona determine who you will become. (Unless you really loved who you were in college.) It doesn't matter if you were the nerd, the dumb jock, the bully or the wallflower. College is over and your new life is beginning. Now is the time for reinvention if you deem it necessary. Think Madonna—but maybe not her cone bra phase. If you were the wallflower, break out of your shell. If you were the bully, try to be nicer. The world is waiting—try to be the best person you can be.

Make good decisions. Remember, the decisions you make after college have real-life consequences. Making a mistake no longer means just being sent to the dean's office or failing a test. This is the real world we're talking about.

Work hard but don't forget to play. Love yourself by learning how to balance your time and your life. Working hard is good but not to the point of burning yourself out. Life may be a race but everyone needs pit stops once in a while. Don't forget to have fun, adults are allowed that, too.

Handle your money well. Earning your own moolah is a big thrill. And spending it is an even bigger one, especially in a world with iPods and nice shoes and well-stocked malls. But saving a little cash every payday is something you have to do. It may not be fun but the security is worth it.

Create your own adventures. You don't want to grow up too fast. Find pleasure in the small things, seek thrills from your everyday life, create adventures out of nothing. Organization is necessary in every grownup's life, but the occasional spontaneity will do you good.

Make a difference. Find a cause, own it and do what you can for it. The world needs you.

Stay in touch with your friends. There is something important about not forgetting the people who knew you when you still had braces, when you were obsessing over that hot senior, when you were scared to death about getting your class cards. They will keep you young. They will keep you grounded.

Don't stop learning. Say hello to the real world. Now your real education begins.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph

Job-hunting 101

From page D1

Questionnaire

Here's a rundown of interviewers' usual questions:

- Tell me something about yourself.
- What do you know about the position/company?
- Why do you want to join this company?
- Why do you want this job?
- What kind of job and position are you looking for?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What/who influenced you to choose this career?
- Which subjects did you like best in college? Why?
- How do you think your college experience has prepared you for a career in this field?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?
- Tell me about your worst failure.
- Tell me about a major problem you had to overcome recently.
- Where do you see yourself five/10 years from now?
- Are you willing to put in overtime hours and work on holidays?
- What can you do for us that other candidates.can't?
- How do you think can you contribute to the company's success?
- Is there any reason for us not to hire you?
- How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team? Would you describe yourself as a leader or a follower?
- How do you deal with difficult co-workers/team members?

Your first page should be "it"—it should contain all essential information and your "unique selling point." Make your resumé, easy to read; no to artsy fonts or cluttered layouts.

Not all employers expect to find a photo with the resumé. But if you're attaching one anyway, make sure it's a good one. You don't want to be judged based on your photo. It's your credentials that should hold their attention.

The cover letter

A resumé must come with a cover letter. Your cover letter should specify for whom the resumé is, and could detail your knowledge of the company and your interest in the job vacancy. The cover letter could spell the difference between having your resumé read and getting a job interview, and having your resumé dumped in the trash. Don't forget to sign it!

The job interview

A series of good interviews could bag you that job. Interviews can be nerve-wracking (terrifying at times, even), so be prepared.

Do:

Arrive early. Come in 15-30 minutes before the scheduled interview. Make a "trial" visit to get a good estimate of traffic and travel time.

Dress professionally (*check sidebar*).

Know the nature of the company's business. Be prepared to discuss the company background, history, its major clients, even competition.

Practice answers to employers' usual questions without sounding like you're delivering a speech. (*check sidebar*)

Remain calm. Show grace under pressure. And take time to think before answering questions. A well-thought answer is better than a rushed, half-baked one.

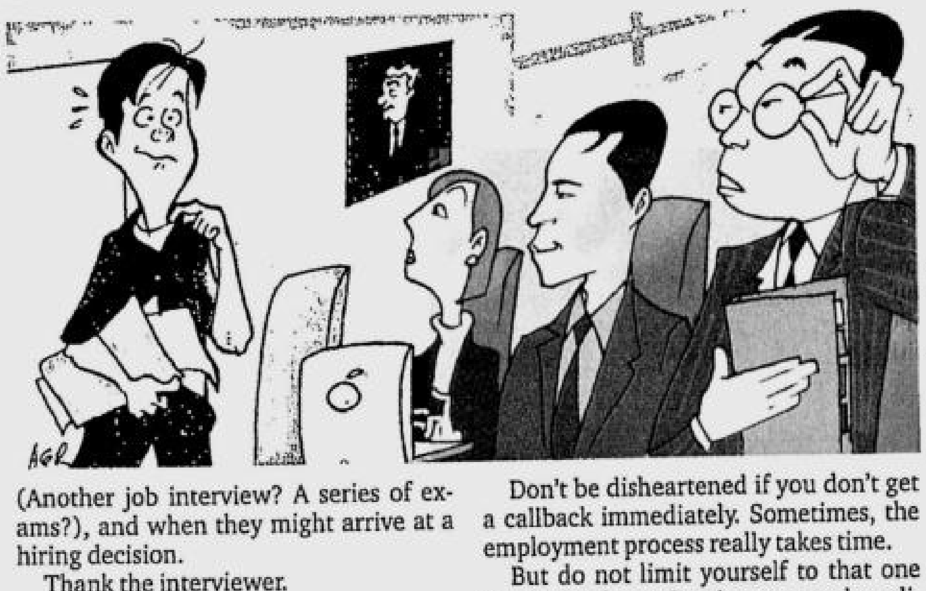
Be courteous at all times. Remember your interviewers' names, shake hands firmly, smile, maintain eye contact, and do not take your seat until offered. Remember to keep your cell phone turned off.

Do not discuss compensation—not just yet. You don't want to sound either overeager or desperate. The employer is just beginning to know you, and what you have to offer.

Bring a pen, a pencil and a notebook. You'll need to jot down information later. The hiring manager might also ask you to fill in some forms.

The interviewer is likely to ask if there's anything you'd like to clarify at the end of the interview. This is the best opportunity for you to ask job expectations (if not yet discussed), and other similar questions that highlight your interest in getting the job.

It's also okay to ask for the next step (Another job interview? A series of exams?), and when they might arrive at a hiring decision.



Thank the interviewer.

Following up the application

Call on the day you were instructed to by the hiring manager. You will only annoy him/her if you keep calling or sending e-mails.

Don't be disheartened if you don't get a callback immediately. Sometimes, the employment process really takes time.

But do not limit yourself to that one company alone. Continue to send applications to other companies. It's best to have options.

Don't fret if you don't get hired at once. And if you make a few mistakes along the way, just credit it to experience. Practice makes perfect.

Remember this is only a guide, how you go about job-hunting is really up to you.

Good luck!

E-mail the author at tri@i-manila.com.ph

How to dress for the job without really trying

What to wear (and what not to wear)

Unless you're seeking employment in an advertising agency or a company known for its ultra-hip culture, it is still better to dress conservatively. Dress to impress! Come in your best corporate attire. This shows professionalism and respect.

For ladies, skirts should not be any shorter than four inches above the knee. Don't wear tops that reveal too much skin (no sleeveless tops or plunging necklines!). Wear conservative low-heeled shoes. Remember: No distracting jewelry like dangling earrings and chunky accessories (that includes your bag). And keep makeup light. Remove nail polish.

For the gents, wear a collared long-sleeved polo with a silk tie, matched with slacks. Wear calf-length socks (not sports socks) and leather shoes (not sneakers or rubber shoes).

Leave your earring (or tongue ring, or any other kind of accessory) at home. You might look cool to yourself, but not to your employer. Conceal body markings such as tattoos. The only acceptable accessory you can wear during the interview is your leather belt.

Do try on the attire before the actual interview. Make sure you are comfortable and that you can move around freely. It'll be very difficult to pay attention to your interviewer when you're fidgeting with your skirt or while you try to forget about your throbbing feet.

Go for the neat look. Clean and trim fingernails, pull your hair back. For males, short, well-groomed hair is best. Facial hair is also a no-no for interviews—the clean-shaven look is best.

Do not wear strong perfume or cologne. It's better not to have any odor than to have a distracting one.

Some pre-employment requirements:

Medical clearance
SSS number
TIN number
NBI/Police clearance
Birth certificate
Transcript of records
2" x 2" and 1" x 1" photos

Websites worth checking out:

www.monster.com
www.careerlab.com
www.careerbuilder.com
www.resumedoctor.com

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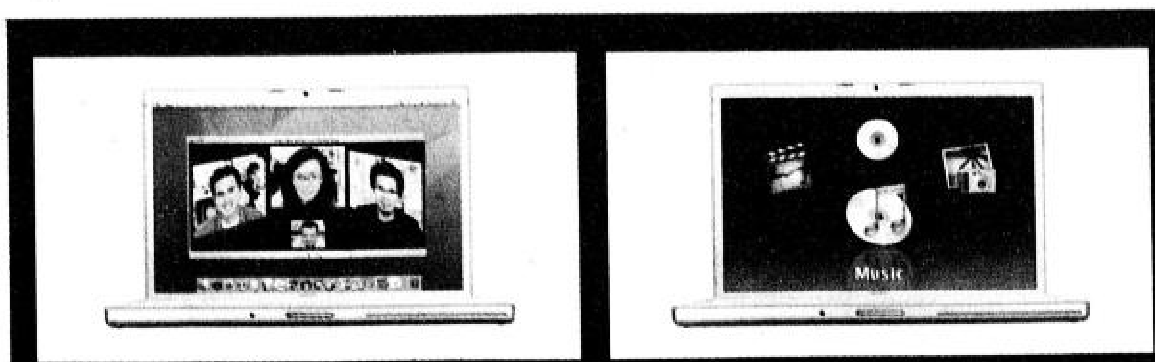
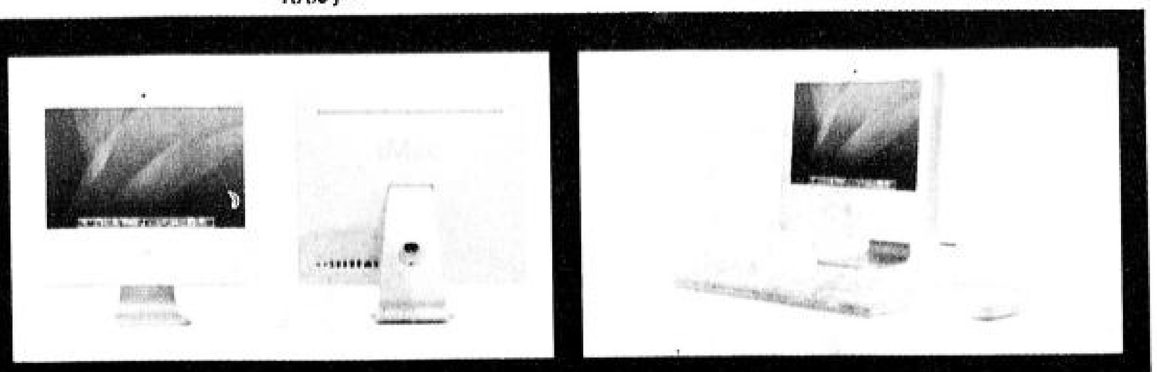
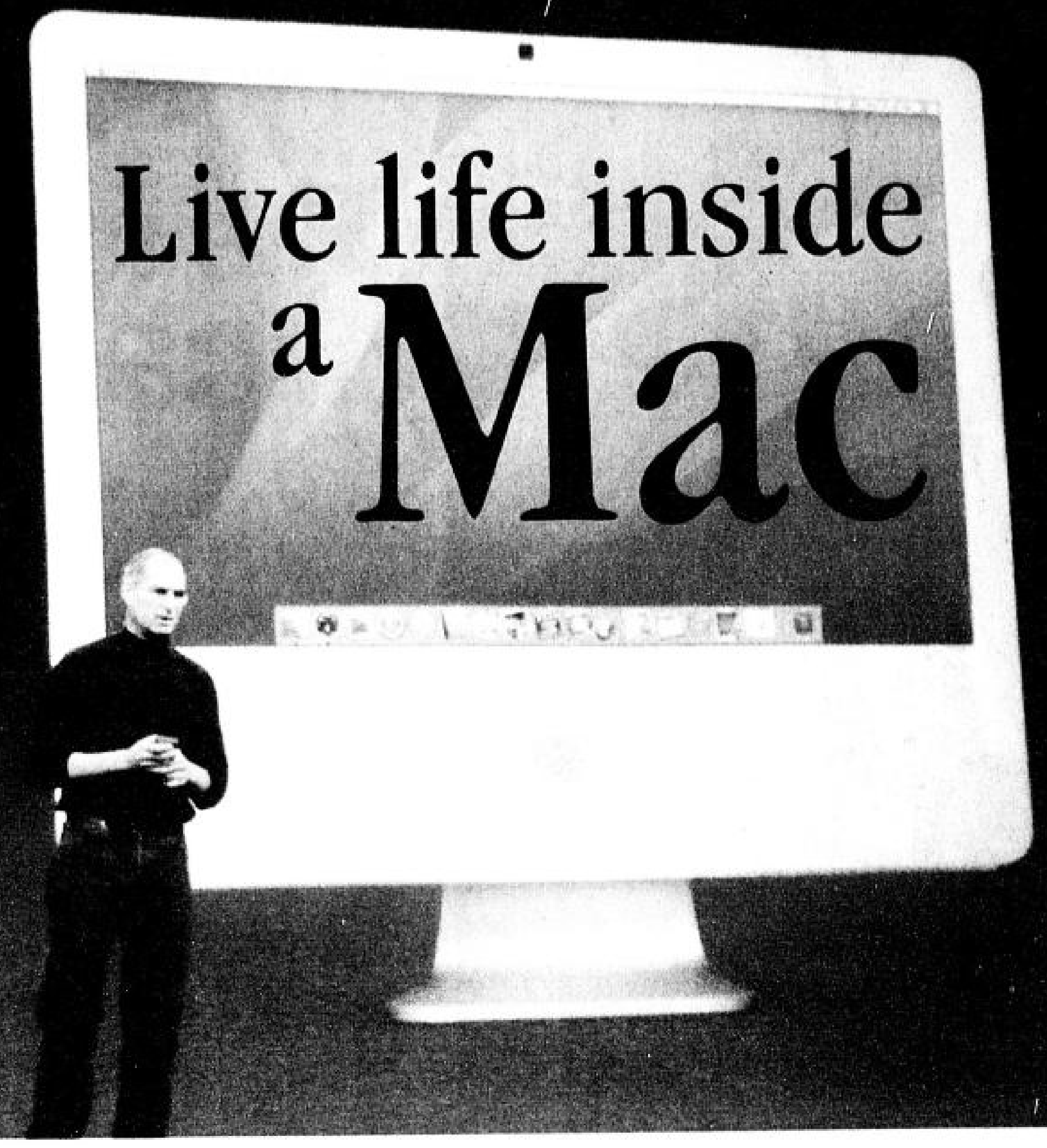


THE MACBOOK Pro comes with an iSight video camera for three-way video conferencing (above). The new Front Row shows documents or programs easily, even from across the room using the Apple Remote Control (right).



THE NEW iMac with Intel inside is Apple's fastest computer ever and comes in 17- or 20-inch screen.

Live life inside a Mac



Express yourself at your most creative and share it with the world through Apple with Intel inside

ILIFE '06 is where the real fun lies in every new Mac.

By Beia Formoso
Contributor

FOR QUITE SOME time, Apple has been referred to as the "other" brand when it comes to computers. Most people think only graphic artists and those with jobs in technology or design use Macs; either that or they're techie geeks.

Regular folks who use computers simply for personal use, such as writing papers, to make PowerPoint projects, e-mail and surf the Internet, just stick to PCs fitted with Microsoft Windows because they've gotten used to the program since it's everywhere.

But the truth is Mac computers are not for those with the technical know-how or in creative professions. Quite the contrary, Mac was and still is designed for even the simplest user, the non-techie who wants easy-to-use form and function in a machine but at the same time freedom to create and express herself.

And now that Mac computers have Intel processors, that means you, yes you who have been using a PC for years, can shift to a Mac with the greatest of ease!

Apple CEO Steve Jobs' presentation of the new iMac desktop computer and MacBook Pro laptop with Intel processors at the 22nd Mac World Conference and Expo held last January in San Francisco, California, marked the start of a new era for Mac and for computers in general. It paved the way for universality in computer programs that can now be used in both Mac and PCs. Software that in the past could only be utilized in PCs can now be installed in Mac computers.

Numerous programs that are common in PCs have long been available in Macs, such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, etc.) and Internet applications like Yahoo Messenger. Yet what a lot of people don't know is that because of Mac's exclusivity in using only its own hardware (the computer/laptop unit) for its software, it makes the computer less prone to viruses and other damaging programs, or irritating stuff on the Net like pop-up ads. It also makes it harder to pirate the software and hardware, thereby all that is in the Mac computer is genuine, clean and safe.

'Where do I begin?'

Yet that is just a piece of the whole apple pie (pun intended). Just try to ask a Mac user what he or she likes about the product, you'll get extreme reactions ranging from an instant spewing of features in one breath, mostly in highly technical jargon, to silence, then eventual one-word blubbers in the form of "*Basta!*"

But in actuality, the fumbling for words or long pauses before answering is another way of saying "where do I begin?" because there are just so many things to love about Mac computers.

Let's start with the outer appearance. The sleek, pristine shell and keyboard in customary white or silver is the company's trademark, so much so that the form has spilled into to its smaller gadgets like the infamous iPod. Apple was also the first to add color to its computer and laptop design with its first iMac and Clamshell iBook series in two-tone themes of candy colors accenting white.

The new computers and laptops, however, have truly outdone themselves when it comes to form.

The MacBook Pro is a silver 15.4 inch-screen laptop while the white iMac desktop computer comes in 17- or 20-inch wide screen flat-panel display. Both come with built-in speakers, microphone, and for the first time ever, iSight, a video camera that allows video conferencing with up to three people simultaneously.

Other new features include an Apple Remote, a remote control for easy program navigation and project presentation from anywhere in the room (what they call Front Row), and the handy MagSafe Connector. A feature that was highly praised at Mac World, this is a magnetic power adaptor that pulls away from the computer fast and safe so if anyone trips over your power cord, the computer won't go crashing onto the floor.

But like most things in life, it's what's inside that counts. The Mac OS X Tiger operating system organizes your programs and files in a simple, easy-to-use manner that is at the same time a joy to look at with creative icons and graphics. From the lifesaver floater icon signifying the Help program to the silver-wired trash can for deleted items, Mac's icons and commands are fun and user-friendly. It is all laid out there in a miniscule dashboard at the bottom of the screen, and can be moved or taken out to your liking.

Everything is also so easy to find with the use of a handy magnifying glass icon at the top right-hand corner of the screen, what is called Spotlight because all you have to do is type the first few letters of the document or program you are searching for and in a couple of seconds it has "spotted" all the items pertaining to your inquiry. Whereas in Microsoft, one would have to click on Start at the bottom of the screen, then click on Find in the pop-up menu, type in the whole word or name, then click Search and wait for a few minutes while it searches through the whole computer before any item shows up.

Award-winning lifestyle applications

But what usually steals the show is iLife, which includes Apple's unique programs, namely iTunes, iPhoto, iMovie, iDvd and Garageband. This award-winning suite of digital lifestyle applications has just gotten even better with the iLife '06 (which comes with every new Mac and is also sold separately).

At the conference, Jobs introduced a brand-new application called iWeb, where you can create an entire personalized website complete with blog entries, photo albums, movies, podcasts and photocasts (more on that later) on the Internet through the Apple website (www.apple.com) in a single click—no configurations or technical hassles.

Also hyped up at Macworld was photocasting, an innovative way to share photos over the Internet directly from within iPhoto via Mac to friends and family.

Photocasting is similar to podcasting but with photos, where anyone can subscribe to your published photo album. Friends or family automatically receive full quality photos directly in their iPhoto or PC. Yup, your family and friends don't have to be Mac users to view your album online (although perhaps they will be after seeing all you can do with a Mac!).

With all these and more, Apple has thought of everything so that you can create or access anything, including downloading music and television shows in iTunes, to creating and distributing movies with iMovie HD (High Definition) and iDVD.

For hardcore photographers, filmmakers and musicians, there are special extensive programs such as Aperture for photography, Final Cut Pro for filmmaking, and various Jampack programs like Remix Tools and Symphony Orchestra to help you and your art or business reach its fullest potential.

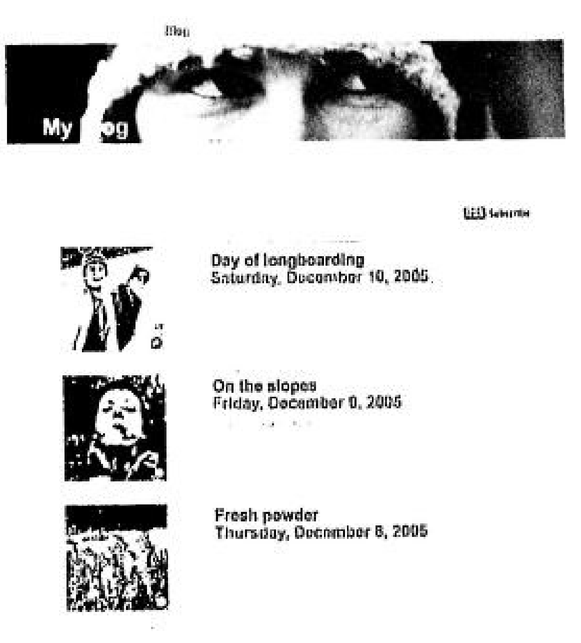
That is truly what sets a Mac computer apart from the rest. It has a personality of its own. It's not just a machine, but an extension of oneself. Apple has built the total package in terms of both hardware and software, keeping in mind appearance but, of course, placing the utmost vitality on what's inside.

And what's inside Mac is now Intel. Here is the spiel from their latest commercial, which played to rousing cheers during Jobs' speech: "The Intel Chip. For years it's been trapped inside PCs. Inside dull little boxes, dutifully performing dull little tasks, when it could have been doing so much more. Starting today, the Intel Chip will be set free and get to live life inside a Mac. Imagine the possibilities."

Now you, too, can get to live life inside a Mac. With Apple, there is no easier or more fun way to express yourself at your most creative and share it with the world.

So do what Apple wants you to do: Imagine the possibilities.

Apple products are distributed by Microwarehouse.



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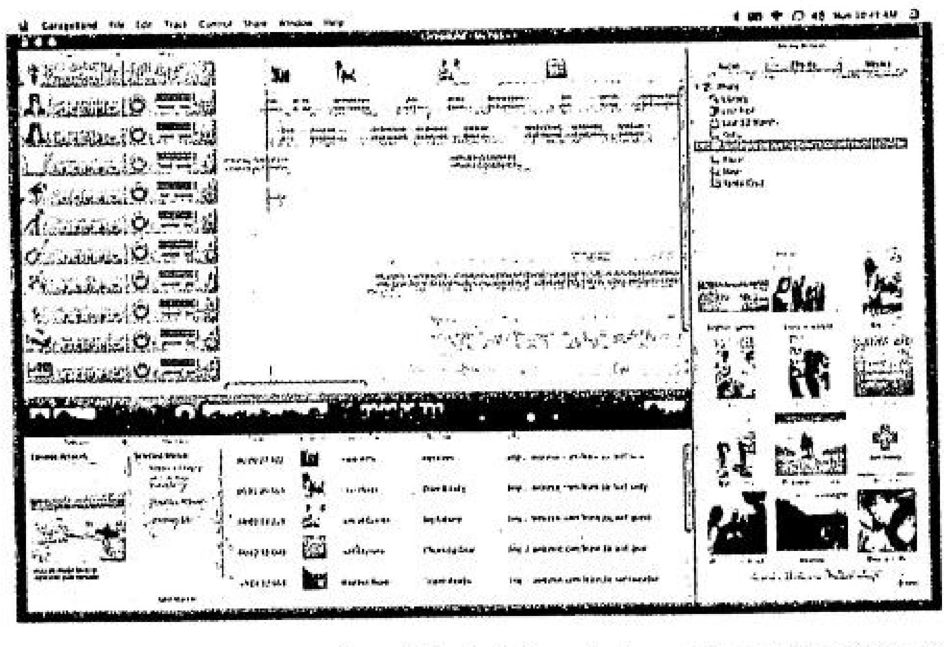
Saturday, December 10, 2005

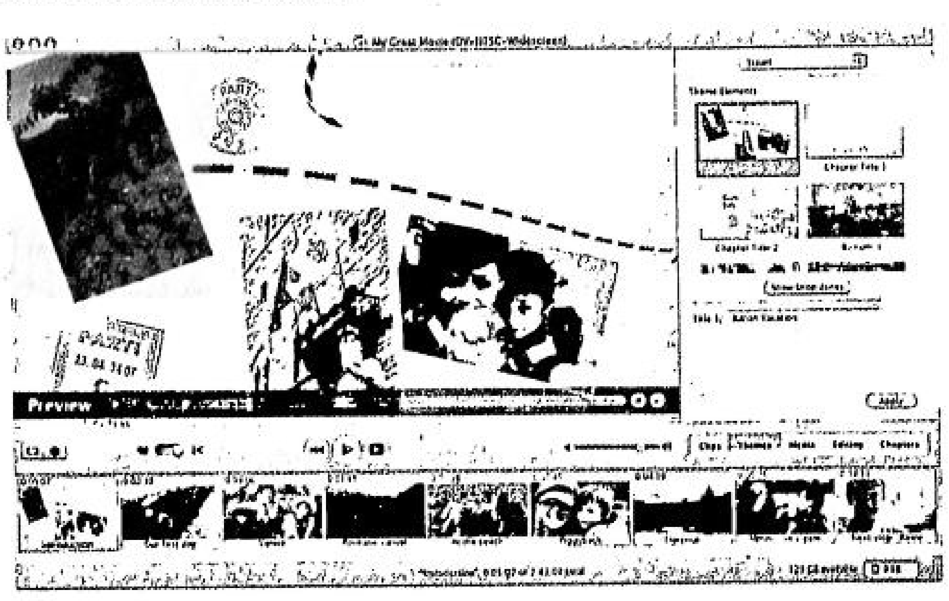
On the slopes
Friday, December 9, 2005

Fresh powder
Thursday, December 8, 2005

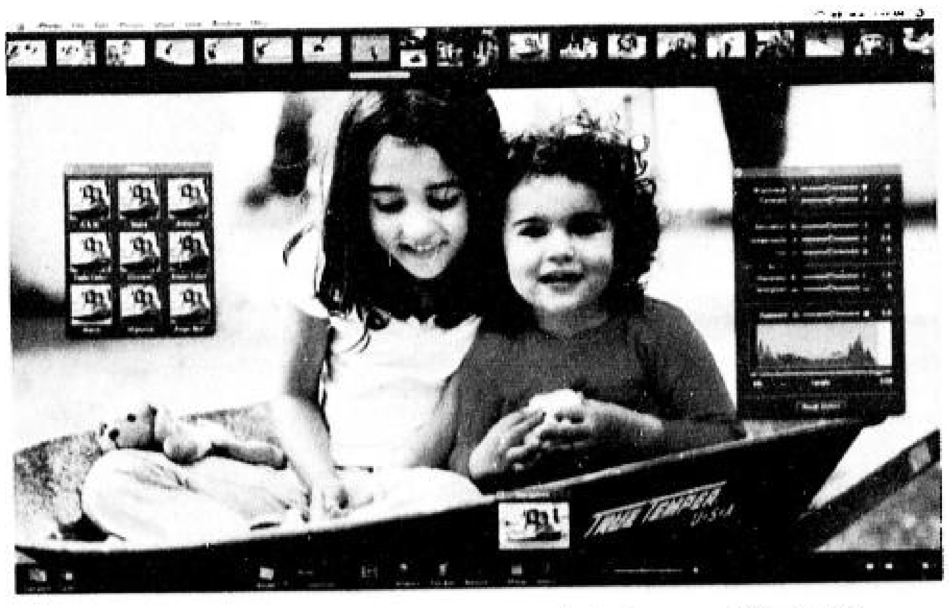
INTRODUCING iWeb: Publish an entire website in a single click—no configurations or technical hassles!



CREATE and edit your own podcast with a built-in podcast recording studio on the new Garageband, which also lets you compose and arrange music.



BRING out the budding filmmaker in you with iMovie High Definition.



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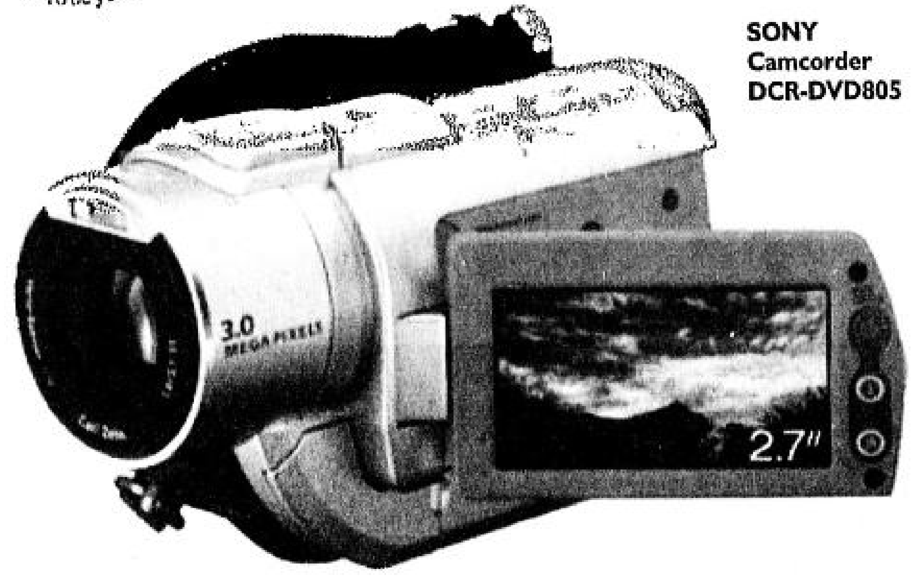


SONY
Camcorder
DCR-DVD805

The take on camcorder

Why not capture your birthday party in wide screen and surround sound with the DCR-DVD805?

By Gabriel H. Mercado
2bU! Contributor

IN THE WORLD OF TECH GADgets, some are as rarely understood as the camcorder segment, due primarily to their prohibitive price, and also because the target market are families.

Hence, camcorders remain rather exclusive. One does not, for example, overhear conversations debating on hard disk versus DVD-based models in jeepneys, whereas ask anyone about cell phones and you will receive compelling arguments about this or that brand.

A brief explanation is therefore in order, and for that I recommend the local Sony website, which does a commendable job segregating the different models, and from which one can glean how other manufacturers market theirs as well.

Staple

Starting at the lower price bracket you will find the 8-mm tape models, still a staple on manufacturer's camcorder menus due to the fact that for a long time there was nothing but 8-mm tapes to record video with.

The aging but functional and affordable medium allows two hours-worth of recording, although its proprietary nature and newer developments are pushing it out. Regardless, those looking for sub P20,000 units might find these appealing—just remember to stock up on tape as these will get harder to find.

Next up is the Digital Video market, of which there are three main segments based on the recording media, namely MiniDV, those using a hard disk and DVDs, where our subject the DVD805 lies therein, and which we shall get to in a second.

These segments then branch out into different models depending on the "form factor," or size in layman's terms, which then determines their use.

There are the fashionable one-handed designs that look at home in dressy parties and affairs, decked in chrome and flashy colors at appropriate fashionable prices.

Then there is the standard strapped-in-your-hand camcorder which, unhampered by aesthetics, feature full on PC, stereo and TV connectivity, long battery life and 20x optical zoom, among others at more reasonable prices.

Then there are also the unique ultra-statement models, like tiny units perfect for ladies with bags that can only hold a stick of lipstick and no other, and the enormous professional models with a large mike jutting out, perfect when you want to be mistaken as a terrorist with a rocket launcher. You can avoid these for the most part, unless you have very specific needs and terribly deep pockets.

Still expensive

So what about the DVD805?

MiniDVs, while digital, still uses expensive tape and are unwieldy by today's standards. Meanwhile, advancements in small form factor hard disks and DVD recording have come about, and thus finally, we come to discuss the Sony Camcorder DCR-DVD805. At P64,999, it's the top-of-the-line, latest DVD Handycam in the market.

DVD camcorders offer direct burning to 8-cm DVDs sans PC, and to answer the Top Two likely questions: yes, you can buy these off of your friendly neighborhood CDR vendor, and, yes, you can play them directly on your P2,000 DVD player.

At 30/60 minutes and a variety of cheap DVD-RWs to choose from, that is video production convenience at an unheard-of scale.

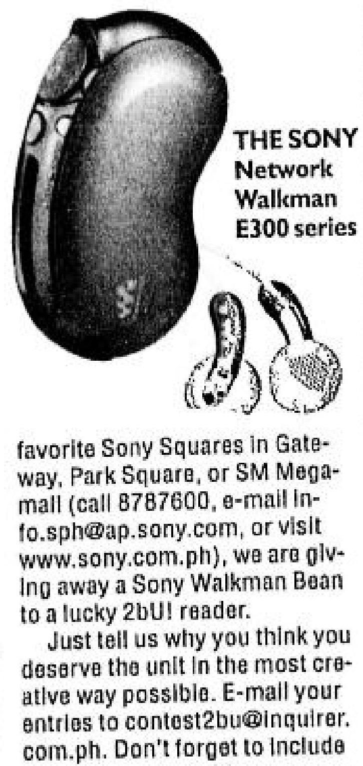
As in record baby's first steps, edit and finalize, then ship it to Papa Jhun in Bahrain in three easy steps-scale.

The DVD805 comes with Dolby Digital 5.1 sound, a 3.1 mpx still camera, a Carl Zeiss Lens, a memory stick option and a terrific 2.7" touch screen, simplifying use tremendously.

Overall, the DVD805 is a use-straight-out-of-the-box device with intuitive controls for the average to beginning user, highlighting 5.1 channel sound, 16:9 wide screen high-resolution and the convenience of recording on DVD.

I recommend the DVD805 for the quality-conscious family cameraman or even aspiring director, but just to be sure if it's best for you, check out its website for other models.

Win a Sony Walkman Bean!



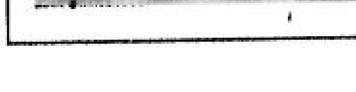
THE SONY Network Walkman E300 series

2BU! AND SONY WANT YOU TO enjoy your own Sony experience with the all-new Sony Walkman Bean.

The innovative Sony Network Walkman E300 series, the new line of flash memory-based mp3 players from Sony, features ATRAC3plus and mp3 playback, plus a built-in FM tuner.

It also comes bundled with SonicStage 3.2 music management software. The Walkman Bean comes in a shape reminiscent of jellybeans. It's available in four yummy colors: Tropical Ice (Blue), Cotton Candy (Pink), Licorice (Black) and Coconut (White).

Although you can buy your own Walkman Bean from your favorite Sony Squares in Gateway, Park Square, or SM Megamall (call 8787600, e-mail info.sph@ap.sony.com, or visit www.sony.com.ph), we are giving away a Sony Walkman Bean to a lucky 2bU! reader.



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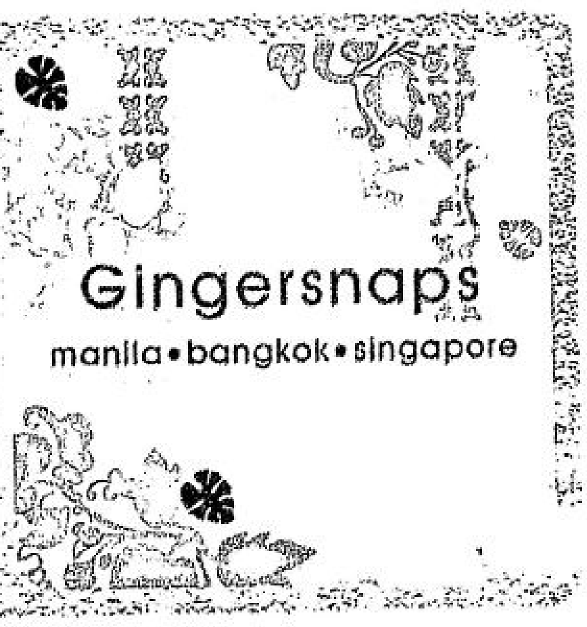
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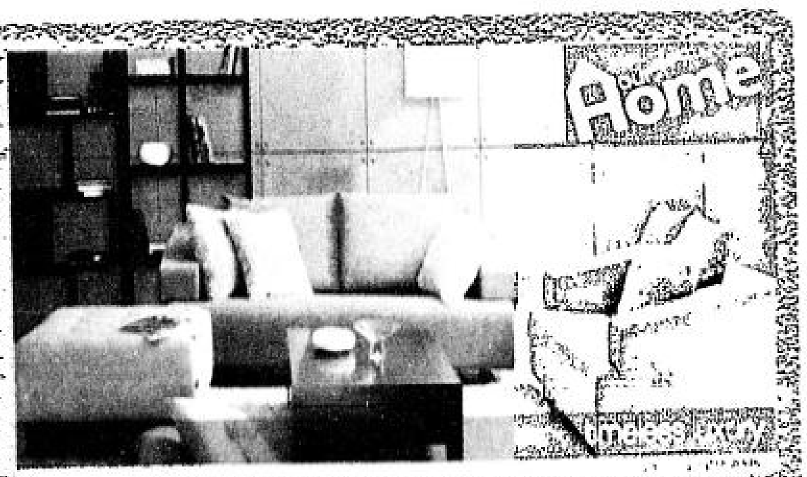

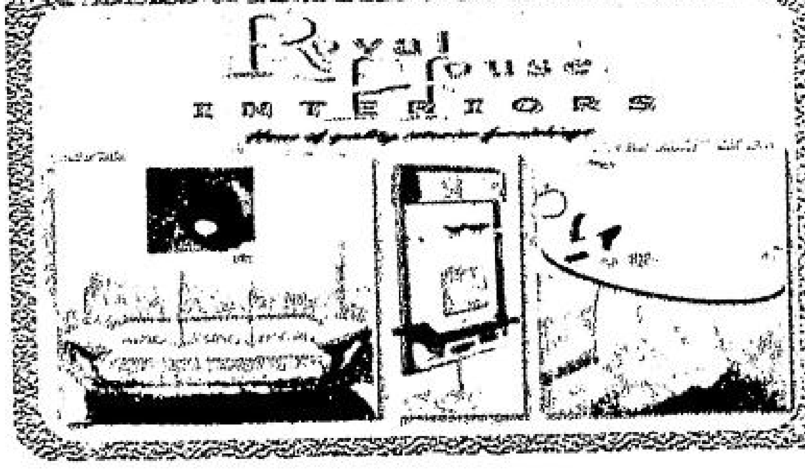
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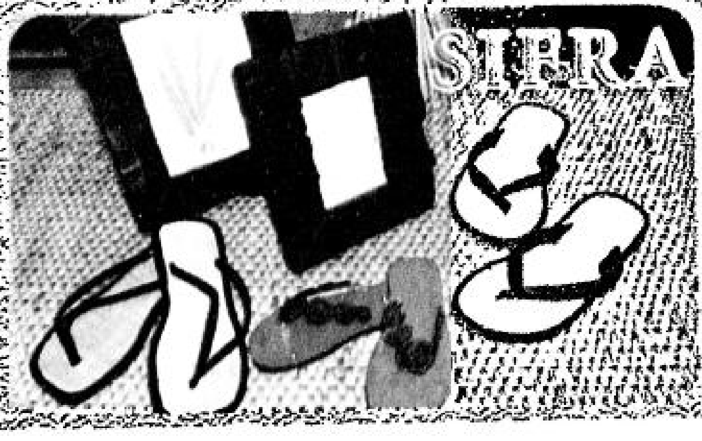

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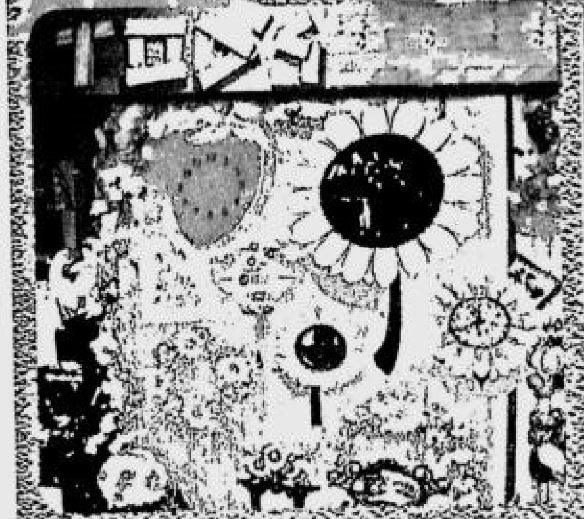

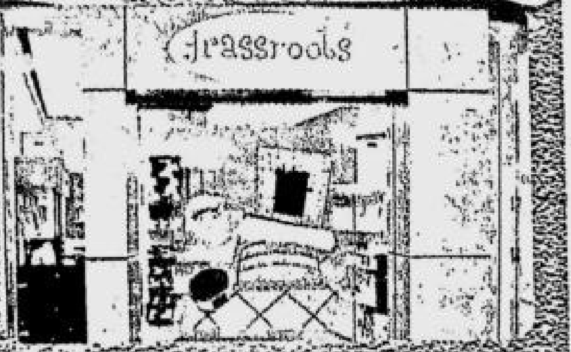
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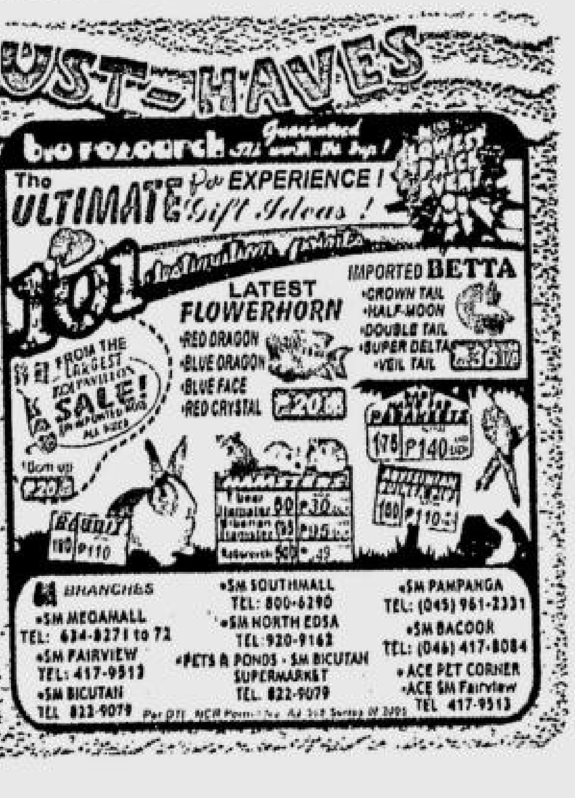
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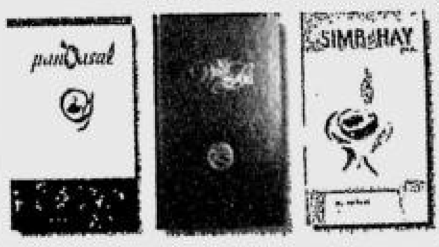
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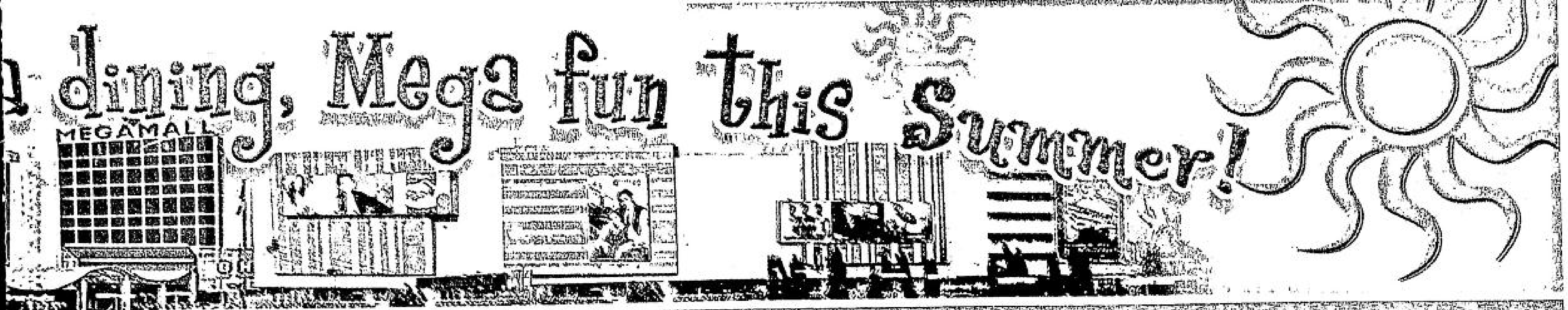

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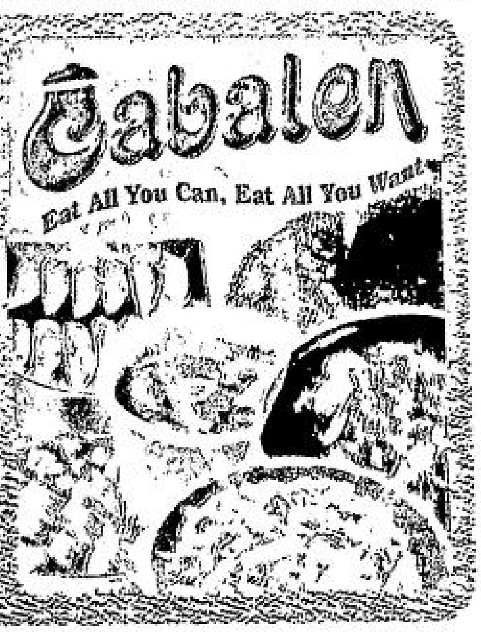
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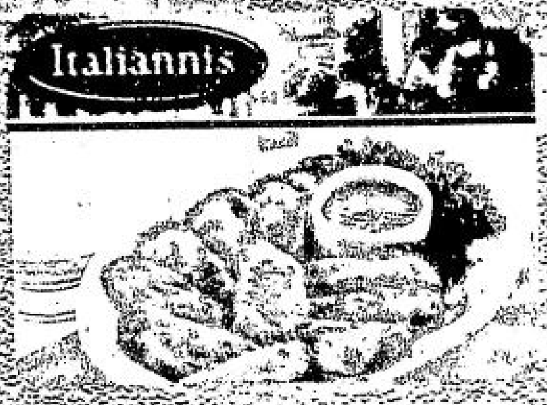
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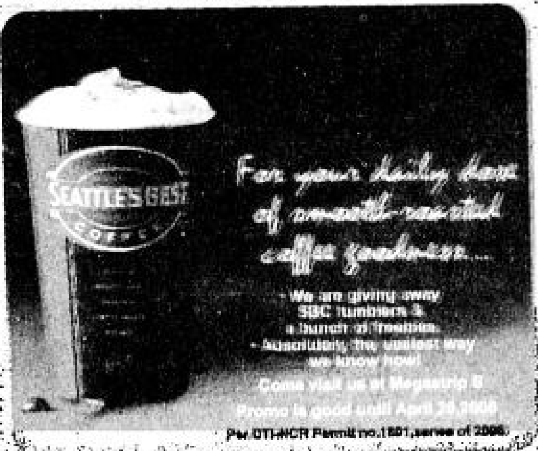
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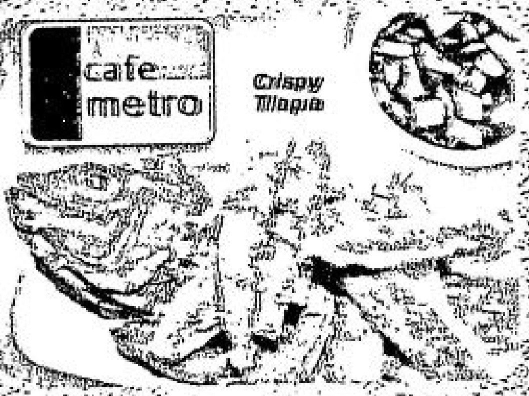
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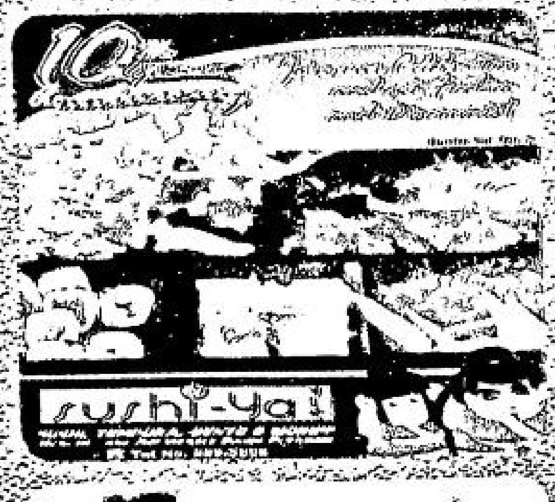

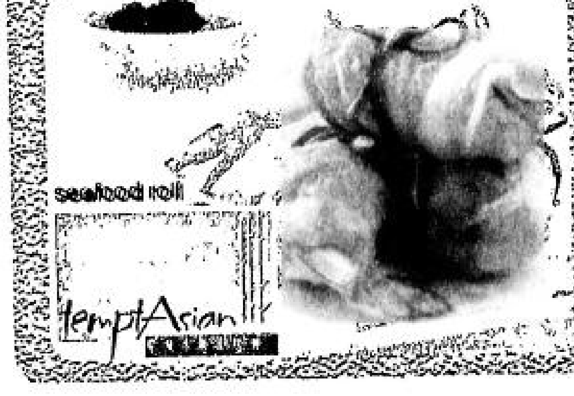
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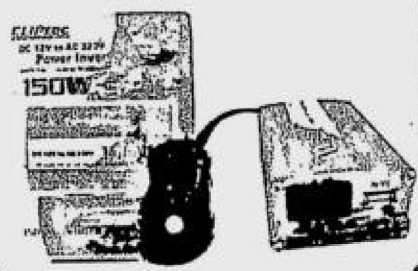

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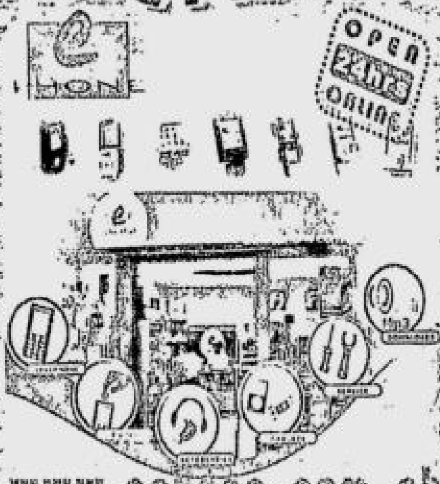

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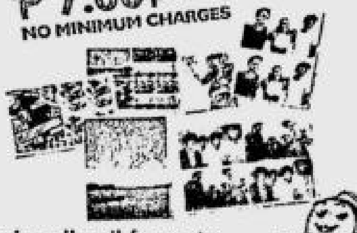

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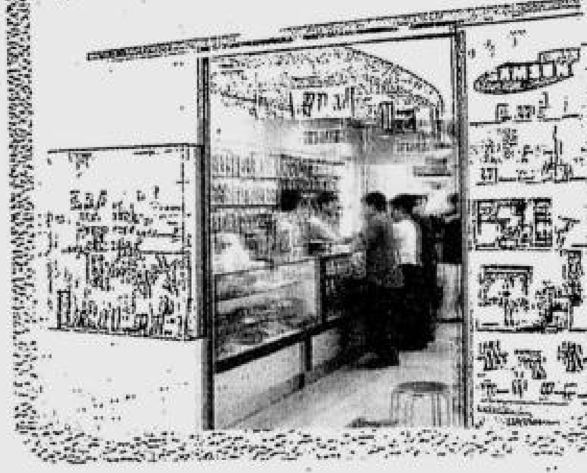

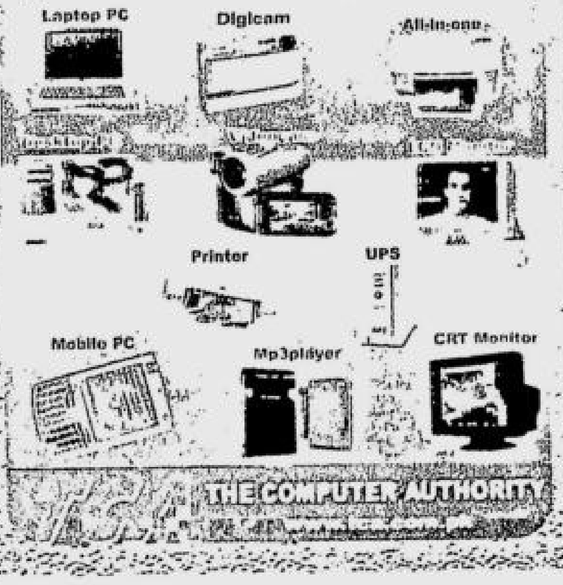

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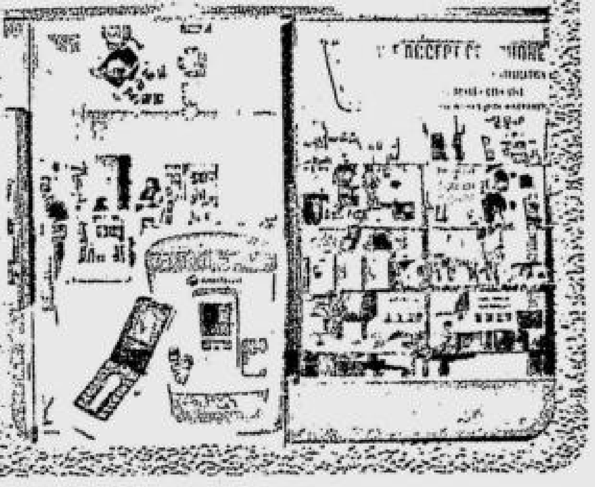

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